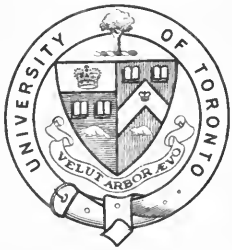

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THE MAN AND THE POET.

FROM THE FRENCH OF FELIX RABBE.

In Two Volumes.

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CHARLES DICKENS AND EVANS,
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TO MADAME E. DE C——.

In the name of our old friendship I venture to dedicate to you this Monograph on Shelley, as to one whom the poet himself would have loved, and whom he would have recognised as one of those souls which are sisters through their love of the True and the Beautiful; members of

> "All that band of sister spirits known
> To one another by a voiceless tone."

F. RABBE.

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SHELLEY:

THE MAN AND THE POET.

INTRODUCTION.

BYRON, conversing with Shelley in literary mood, admitted frankly that until that time he had written for women readers only, but that when he should have reached the age of forty he intended to change his tactics, and to show mankind what he was capable of doing. Shelley replied: "Do it at once; write nothing but with conviction of its truth. You should teach the wise, not learn from the foolish. Time will reverse the verdict of the crowd. Contemporary criticism merely represents the amount of ignorance that must be encountered by genius."

Time has proved Shelley to be in the right; the verdict of the crowd has been reversed, and

Shelley's poetry will endure while the English language lasts.

More than thirty years ago an English critic testified to the profound influence of his genius on contemporary poets. "Imitation of Shelley is obvious," wrote one of his biographers in 1850, "in the majority of the eminent poets of this century." That his influence has become even more marked since then is sufficiently proved by naming Tennyson, Browning, and Swinburne.

While the name of Shelley was growing great in his native land and becoming a synonym for Poetry, while his verse was translated in Germany, Italy, and Spain, and found its way into America, France remained almost in ignorance of his powers; or if he sometimes received a passing tribute in periodical literature, such superficial articles contained little beyond a more or less romantic biography of the poet, or vague commonplaces concerning his genius.* His works remained all but unknown and unappreciated,

* An exception must be made in favour of M. Odysse Barot's "Étude," in the *Revue Contemporaine*, November and December, 1867. That article, notwithstanding its inaccuracies and omissions, is the most appreciative work on Shelley that has as yet been published in France.

and one of the deepest thinkers of the age was looked upon as a second or third-class Chatterton, an extravagant and unproductive dreamer, capable at the utmost of supplying a few trivialities to the keepsake literature of the day.

But the moment seems to have arrived for France to do justice to the author of "Alastor," "Prometheus Unbound," "Hellas," "The Cenci," and so many other magnificent poems, a single one of which would suffice to establish a poet's fame for ever. From every quarter of the literary world attention is at length aroused to a poet greater than Byron, but who had not found translation into French, when renderings of "Childe Harold" and "Don Juan" were already innumerable.* It must be admitted that at the

* Now that French critics are more appreciative of Shelley and his works, some excellent essays on his character and genius, and on some of his poems, have appeared, viz.: An article from the pen of M. Schuré in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, for 1st February, 1877; an excellent chapter by M. Darmesteter, in his "Essais de Littérature Anglaise;" and a thoughtful and appreciative study of "The Cenci" in M. Sarrazin's work, "Poëtes Modernes de l'Angleterre." From M. Taine, in his "Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise," we might have expected criticism more worthy of the genius of Shelley, and of his very great influence on English poetry in this century.

present time the design of making such a poet as Shelley known in France may seem somewhat rash, and that the editor of a *Traduction Complète* of his poems must possess a certain amount of boldness and courage. Setting aside his title of poet, he is so exceptional a genius, so completely at variance with his epoch, so far removed from the positive, utilitarian, and realistic ideas by which it is absorbed, that the question may be fairly put: What have we to do with such dreamers? What good end can be served by a revolutionary and humanitarian Milton or Shakespeare? Intellectual and moral progress, the reign of Justice and Right, love towards all who suffer and weep on earth, the Beautiful, the Good, the Divine, the Ideal in Nature, in Art, and in Society—we have abolished all such follies!

Clearly it is not to these Bœotians of the nineteenth century that Shelley speaks. More than any other human being he belongs to that race of mankind (living anachronisms) who, finding nothing around them worthy of their song, elevate themselves, by one superhuman stroke of their wings, above the conditions and conventions

of the visible world. Their eyes are fixed exclusively on a world of thought and spirit, on eternal ideas that are infinitely more real and true to them than the ephemeral phantasmagoria of the phenomena of space and time, because they are the primordial laws of humanity, the divine spark in man, and guide him, in spite of himself, to his mysterious ends. Happier than other poets, perchance no less gifted than he had they likewise possessed his faith, he never suffered shipwreck on the rocks of doubt and despair; he stands at the antipodes of scepticism, misanthropy, and solitary, fruitless melancholy — a clarion-voice of faith, hope, and love. "Give me but a lever," he exclaims with Archimedes, "and I will move the world." And as he was convinced that such a lever could never be found among fragile and perishable things, he sought it in the only faculty which escapes the attacks of circumstance and time—the unconquerable strength of man's spirit and his will, emanating from that universal spirit in Nature which is God. In this sense he may be termed the most spiritual, the most ideal, the most religious of poets. His atheism, or pantheism,

whichever we may choose to call it, is but an act of faith in that divine something that his soul felt within herself when communing with Nature. If, in this high sense, he is the most religious of poets, he is also, in the strongest acceptation of the term, the most inspired; and it is to him, if to any one among modern poets, we may apply the name of *vates*. He sees, perceives, and feels what he sings; and the spirit, as he was wont to repeat, becoming like unto the object of its contemplation, he is transformed into his own conceptions; the spirit of Nature becomes incarnate within him; he is like unto a seer and a prophet; at times he is an echo of Job, Isaiah, and Christ.

When thus inspired, the abstract becomes visible; allegory is real; metaphysics are transformed into a living mythology, "a splendid Pantheon," as Macaulay says. An impassioned and living idealism is the keynote of the poetry of Shelley.

He possesses in a more marked degree than any other poet of our time a warmth and tenderness of heart, a love of mankind, unequalled in expression save by Shakespeare; it is a love

that attains to heroism, to self-sacrifice, to martyrdom.

It has been well remarked by one of our young French poets,* who has more than one point of resemblance to Shelley: "Both Shakespeare and Shelley have sucked the milk of human kindness, their wide sympathies embrace all ages and every people; no form of religion can contain them, they overflow with nature and humanity."

All Shelley's morality and philosophy may be summed up in one word—*Love;* but it is love in its highest and most ideal acceptation, as it was understood by Plato, Jesus, and Dante, the love that consists in the universal attraction of all beings, the shining of the Everlasting Beauty in the soul of man, the explanation of life; it is love as set forth not long ago by one of the few Platonists of this century, when he wrote concerning a dialogue not understood by the Pharisees of our day, and being filled with the spirit of *Phædrus* and the *Banquet,* exclaimed: "Love is the real Orpheus. . . . . I am

* Maurice Bouchor, "Notice sur Shelley" (*Revue des Chefs-d'œuvre*, 10 Février, 1884); also an article in the *Passant*, 5th January, 1887.

convinced it will hold an important place in the philosophy of the future." When the day shall have come for Shelley's poems to be, I do not say popular, but understood and appreciated by delicate and pure minds, M. Renan's *desideratum* will not be far from realisation.

Michelet, in his fine work, "La Mer," describes two kinds of melancholy or sadness: the one appertaining to women, the other to strong men—the one peculiar to sensitive souls who weep for themselves, and the other to the unselfish hearts who accept their own lot and always bless Nature, but who, at the same time, are pained by the evils in the world, and draw strength to resist and act from their very sufferings.

It may be affirmed that the soul of Shelley was stricken by both these forms of sadness, but that which dominates is the second, the heroic melancholy which is born of sympathy with all the sorrows of humanity, and of despair at being unable to apply a remedy.

Like all great souls who are devoted to the progress and happiness of the human race, Shelley dreamed of a new golden age, of a universal regeneration, whose dawn will appear when man

shall cast off his borrowed nature, and become once more his true self.

At an age when, generally speaking, life presents itself in smiling garb, Shelley was deeply moved at the sight of the evil in the world, and told himself that all the active forces of the human intellect should tend to lessen if not to eliminate it altogether from the face of the earth, to turn, as he often said, this world into a heaven; that if religions, traditional philosophy, and political institutions are incapable of obtaining this result, it is because they systematically deviate from those great moral and natural principles which are the foundation of every truly human and progressive idea; that to Poetry alone, therefore, belongs the duty of creating anew, as it were, the understanding and the heart of man, which have been misled and disfigured by prejudice, habit, and servile obedience, each and all the tainted fruits of egotism. Poetry alone, that is to say Inspiration (which is but the echo of the great voice of Nature in the soul of the poet) can mount to the pure and single source whence flow the ideas of Truth, Justice, and Love, they only being capable of directing humanity towards

happiness, and if the spirit of good in the world has been able to resist the incessant attacks of the spirit of evil (viz. tyranny, authority in all its forms of faith, custom, education), if, in a word, human nature is entitled not to despair of itself, it is owing to the poets alone, to the true teachers who, rising above their age, above the ephemeral institutions of religion and policy, have from time to time led humanity back to the contemplation of the natural, indestructible, and eternal order of things, in which are contained the only laws that can bring forth improvement and happiness to mankind. Such have been the inventors of language, of music, and of all the arts. Such were Job and the Prophets, Homer, Æschylus and Plato, Dante, Shakespeare, and Rousseau. "Such shall I be if I am a poet," Shelley said to himself. And he kept his word.

His poems are full of modern revolutionary ideas, but still more full of the wisdom of the ancients, echoing, as it were, every great poet and every great thinker of all the ages; he is their brother and successor. His poetry, according to a definition of Byron's which might be Shelley's own, is, in truth, "the consciousness

of a past and future world," that "before and after" which he has sung.

The history of Shelley's life is inseparable from his works, which, for the most part, are the moral autobiography of his soul; and we have sought it above all in Shelley himself, in his poems, in his numerous prose writings or fragments,* and especially in his letters, of which we regret we can only offer a few extracts; finally in the recollections and memoirs written by his wife and the few friends who knew him intimately. We have also made use of more recent biographies, especially when, as is the case with those by MacCarthy† and Rossetti,‡ the most scrupulous historical accuracy is combined with reverence for their subject and impartial criticism.

* H. B. Forman, "The Prose Works of P. Shelley," 4 vols., 1880. Mr. Forman has also edited "The Poetical Works of Shelley," 4 vols., 1882. Besides this magnificent edition, M. Rossetti has edited "Shelley's Poetical Works," 3 vols., 1881, with the latest philological criticisms on the poet.

† "Shelley's Early Life, from Original Sources," by Denis Florence MacCarthy, 1872.

‡ "Memoir of Shelley," at the beginning of the first vol. of his edition of Shelley's poems.

But what are we to say of a dull and spiteful composition in two enormous quarto volumes of nearly a thousand pages, in which Mr. Jeaffreson has chosen, under the title of "The Real Shelley,"* to make himself the mouthpiece of every calumny, of every grudge, of every enmity harboured against the great poet by Anglican cant? Two volumes as thick as his own would be required for his refutation, and who would care to read them? We shall content ourselves by giving an occasional specimen of this puerile yet elephantine criticism, while we regret that real talent should have been wasted on such an ungrateful task. Mr. Jeaffreson's big book proves but one thing: that Shelley struck home when he attacked the intolerant hypocrisy of Anglican fanaticism, which has never been capable either of learning or forgetting.

If there are some shadows or stains on Shelley's character and life, they fade away and disappear in the resplendent light of his genius, and we may give him the benefit of his own wise reflections on the great poets who preceded

* "The Real Shelley," by J. C. Jeaffreson, author of "The Real Lord Byron," 2 vols., 1885.

him. Mr. Jeaffreson would have done well to meditate on these words before taking up his pen:

> Let us for the moment stoop to the arbitration of popular breath, and usurping and uniting in our own persons the incompatible characters of accuser, witness, judge, and executioner, let us decide without trial, testimony, or form, that certain motives of those who are "there sitting where we dare not soar" are reprehensible. Let us assume that Homer was a drunkard, that Virgil was a flatterer, that Horace was a coward, that Tasso was a madman, that Lord Bacon was a peculator, that Raphael was a libertine, that Spenser was a poet laureate. It is inconsistent with this division of our subject to cite living poets, but posterity has done ample justice to the great names now referred to. Their errors have been weighed and found to have been dust in the balance; if their sins "were as scarlet, they are now white as snow;" they have been washed in the blood of the mediator and redeemer, time. . . "Judge not, lest ye be judged."

To Shelley may be applied, more fitly than to any other, the noble words used by Berlioz regarding himself:

> There are among men certain beings endowed with a peculiar sensitiveness. They do not feel either in the same manner or the same degree as other men, and in their regard the exception becomes the rule. Their peculiar nature gives the key to their extraordinary life, which in its turn affords an explanation of their fate. Now it is exceptional natures who lead the world; and it is well that it should be so, for by their struggles and their pain they purchase light and movement for humanity.

Mr. Jeaffreson's book increased our eager expectation of Mr. Dowden's "Life of Shelley," which promised to contain the latest historical criticism of the poet.* Nor were we disappointed. Thanks to his work, we have been able to fill up more than one gap in our earlier labours, and to form a more decided opinion on certain points in the poet's life that were open to doubt and controversy. The numerous and important original sources whence Mr. Dowden has derived new material of all kinds render his "Life of Shelley" a crowning work, which supplies the place of all others, and must necessarily be consulted by any future student of the poet. In perusing it, we could not but regret that we might not substitute for our own work a simple translation of its admirable pages. But, at any rate, we have given in substance all the valuable information he has added to the story of Shelley and of Shelley's genius. In addition to the above sources, so various and numerous that of themselves they supply sufficient matter for an ample biography,

* "The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley," by Edward Dowden, Professor of English Literature in the University of Dublin, in 2 vols. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, & Co., 1886.

we must acknowledge the reception of documents of all kinds from the zealous and enthusiastic Shelley Society in London. This Society, ranking worthily with those devoted to Shakespeare and Spenser, omits no means of adding daily some fresh revelation to the poet's history, some new ray to his aureole.

Shelley believed that poets could only be rendered in another language by their equals, and in the same rhythm as the original verse; and following these rules, he has himself translated into English verse favourite passages from his great models, Homer, Euripides, Dante, Calderon, and Goethe.

Until a French poet worthy of Shelley shall translate his poems into verse, following in the track of some few shining footsteps,* we have endeavoured to render into dull and ungrateful prose, not perhaps the untranslatable music and

* We allude to some excellent renderings of detached poems which have lately been published, and have served us as models, viz., "The Cenci" and "Hellas," translated by Madame Tola Dorian; "Alastor," by M. Sarrazin; part of "Queen Mab," by F. V. Hugo; and a few short pieces by M. Maurice Bouchor.

harmony, but at least the movement, the warmth, the delicacy of his thought, and something of the brightness, the power, the strangeness, and the daring originality of his expression. Shelley himself would, doubtless, have pardoned us for thus destroying his divine music, for the reason that by means of our translation a greater number of human souls would share in the treasures of wisdom and tenderness that he would fain have spread before the whole world.

We are glad to express our gratitude to those who, in order to render our work less imperfect, have lent us, with a zeal beyond all praise, the help of their judgment and advice. They have kindly consented to accept the dedication of some of Shelley's masterpieces; but we are conscious that their best reward will be the knowledge that they have helped to popularise a poet who cannot be read without being loved, and who cannot be loved without exciting among men a longing to become like him, to be better, more generous, and more human.

F. RABBE.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY YEARS OF SHELLEY — FIELD PLACE — BRENTFORD. 1792–1805.

ON August 4th, 1792, at Field Place, near the picturesque little town of Horsham, in Sussex —the county which had already brought forth Collins and Otway—a child was born who was destined to become indisputably the greatest English poet of the nineteenth century. In the little chamber in which he first saw the light the following inscription may now be read:

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY
Was born in this room,
August 4th, 1792.

Shrine of the dawning speech and thought
Of Shelley sacred be,
To all who bow where Time has brought
Gifts to Eternity.

Two spirits, that of Plato and that of the French Revolution, met, wondering at each other, over the cradle of this marvellous child. The Spirit of Revolution had found her Poet. Through a strange combination of destiny, she marked a scion of England's cold and selfish aristocracy on the forehead as her Pindar, as though she needed, while standing ankle-deep in blood, to cool her brow in the mists of the North, and to take sanctuary in the virginal and noble soul, where her purest and sublimest accents should reverberate for ever.

Without retracing, with certain of his biographers, the poet's ancestors to the fabulous Sir Guyon de Shelley, the contemporary of Roland and Charlemagne, we can, nevertheless, thanks to the genealogical tree provided by Mr. Forman, follow the direct line of ascent of the Shelleys of Goring Castle, to which branch Percy Bysshe Shelley belonged, so far as the year 1623. We will not delay over the arguments by which Mr. Jeaffreson endeavours in a long chapter of his bulky protest to prove that the Castle Goring branch had nothing in common with the more aristocratic branch of the Michaelsgrove Shelleys,

that it owned no remarkable name, no illustrious member, and that the poet's family has, in fact, no right to be called patrician. What matters it to Shelley's fame that the nobility of his family should be more or less authenticated, or his coat of arms more or less ancient? His nobility consists in his genius, and, as he himself proudly foretold,

> What have we done
> None shall dare vouch, though it be truly known;
> That record shall remain, when they must pass
> Who built their pride on its oblivion;
> And fame in human hope which sculptured was,
> Survive the perished scrolls of unenduring brass.

If there was in Shelley something of the aristocrat, "the quintessence of a gentleman," as Hunt says, it was the product of an exquisite combination of sentiment, of moral grace, and of habitual sympathy.

The first baronetcy in the family of the Castle Goring Shelleys was bestowed on Bysshe Shelley, the poet's grandfather, a remarkable character, with strange and striking traits of likeness to his grandson, and yet strongly contrasting with him.

Of great personal beauty and charm of address,

he had succeeded, after a somewhat obscurely passed youth, in winning successively the hands and fortunes of two heiresses, whose wealth had principally attracted him. The first, Mary Catherine Mitchell, the only daughter of the Rev. Theobald Mitchell, of Horsham, ran away with him from her father's house when eighteen years of age. They were married in London, whence they proceeded to Paris.

This episode in the life of the grandfather was to be reproduced in that of the grandson, but with an essential difference. The poet, in carrying off his successive brides, was not actuated by cupidity, but by love.

Mary Bysshe Shelley died in 1760, leaving three children, one of whom, Timothy Shelley, was destined to be the father of the poet. Nine years later, Bysshe, at the age of thirty-eight, again eloped with an heiress, Miss Elizabeth Jane Sidney Perry, the only daughter of William Perry, and descending in a direct line from the Sidneys, Earls of Leicester. Her fortune was one of the largest in Kent. Five sons and two daughters were the issue of this marriage.

With very pardonable weakness, and although

not one drop of Sidney blood ran in his veins, Shelley liked to reckon the great Sir Philip Sidney among his ancestors. In his "Adonais" he calls him "A spirit without spot." From an intellectual and moral point of view, this indeed is his true descent and legitimate aristocracy.

After the death of his elder brother, who died childless in 1790, Bysshe Shelley devoted himself to the embellishment of Field Place, of which he was the only representative. With advancing years he had become more and more eccentric. While spending eighty thousand pounds in building the seat of the new baronets of Castle Goring, he spent the last thirty years of his life poorly enough in a little cottage on the Arun. He was assiduous in frequenting the Horsham public-houses, where he laboured *inter pocula* (without drinking, however) for the electoral successes of the Whigs, and thus succeeded in obtaining a baronetcy in 1806, through his patron, the Duke of Norfolk. On his death in 1815, he left a large fortune of £300,000 in the funds, and £20,000 a year, without counting £10,000 in bank-notes hidden in his sofa cushions or between the pages of the few books that he possessed.

With all these eccentricities of a gentleman of the olden time, Sir Bysshe displayed a great independence of character. He was profoundly sceptical in philosophy, and entirely without speculative opinions of his own; but he professed an extreme tolerance for the opinions of others. Shelley speaks of him in one of his letters as an atheist, who looked forward to annihilation only at the close of life.

Both his unbelief and his tolerance drew him towards his grandson in the same measure that they estranged him from his own son, who was far from sharing those sentiments.

Shelley, who was always on affable and courteous terms with his grandfather, although there was no great familiarity between them, spoke of him without either affection or dislike; but he could not forgive his indifference to the progress of humanity, his want of generosity and heart, and, more than all, his lust for gold, that "curse of man," as he calls it. Some traces of his grandfather may perhaps be recognised in one of the characters in "Rosalind and Helen," who dies "pale with a quenchless thirst of gold."

The poet's father, Timothy Shelley, had

received the usual education of a gentleman of the period. After an undistinguished career at Oxford, he had made the customary grand tour of Europe. According to Medwin, all he brought back with him was a very superficial acquaintance with France, a claim to knowledge of the world, and an extremely bad painting of Vesuvius in eruption. He was a thorough English gentleman of the school of Chesterfield; he reduced politeness to outward formalities, and morality to expediency. He was proud of his name and wealth, and was ready to forgive his son any and everything except a marriage beneath him. His religious opinions were extremely broad, although he professed to accept the Thirty-Nine Articles and the Established form of worship; but in philosophy he held with *noism*, to use Shelley's word. His moral sense was somewhat dull, though he was servile in his conformity to rules and conventionalities, in a word, to *cant*, that social hypocrisy which Byron declares to be "the only homage paid to virtue in England." He would sacrifice the most imperious sentiments of nature to the respect due to established forms, yet he understood perfectly

how to take care of the material interests and comforts of life. A brilliant sportsman, a vain man, although without any kind of talent; proud of his son's genius, provided it should shed some political lustre on his name and family; playing rather a poor part in politics, merely voting with his party as a thorough-going partisan of the Duke of Norfolk; such a man, we may agree with Mr. Rossetti, "was ill-adapted to be the father of so divine a phenomenon as Percy Bysshe Shelley."

In 1791, at the age of thirty-eight, he had married a young lady of good family and rare loveliness—Miss Elizabeth Pilfold, the daughter of Charles Pilfold, Esq., of Effingham, Surrey. Of her the poet says, "She was gentle and tolerant, but narrow-minded." She was intelligent, a good letter-writer, and yet with very little liking for literature, especially poetry. Her yielding disposition caused her always to take the side of paternal authority between her husband and her son, while her orthodox feelings were readily alarmed at the influence the young free-thinker might exercise over his sisters' minds, to the prejudice of their salvation.

Two sons and five daughters, all of rare beauty, were the issue of this marriage. Percy Bysshe Shelley was the eldest.

His early and altogether feminine education among his young sisters at Field Place left an indelible mark on his mind. His childish love for his sisters, for those angelically beautiful creatures who constituted all his world, became the type of the Platonic love he laid at the feet of women, when they seemed to him to realise in part the pure ideal he had beheld in the unconscious visions of his childhood.

All his life he recalled with delight his awakening as a child to the joys of home, to innocent affection, to untroubled and passionless love, and at the same time to the first revelations of Nature's magic. He has described these impressions of his childhood, these primitive elements of reflection and imagination, in the second canto of "The Revolt of Islam":

> The star-light smile of children, the sweet looks
> Of women, the fair breast from which I fed,
> The murmur of the unreposing brooks,
> And the green light which, shifting overhead,
> Some tangled bower of vines around me shed,

The shells on the sea-sand, and the wild flowers,
The lamp-light through the rafters cheerly spread,
And on the twining flax—in life's young hours
These sights and sounds did nurse my spirit's folded powers.

That delightful life, spent in the companionship of lovely, refined, and pure beings, beneath the tender eyes of a mother, "that innocent Paradise" did not last long for Shelley. The sensitive plant, whom the first contact with the rude realities of the world would wound for ever, was soon transplanted from the maternal Eden to the rough fields of life and social conflict. At the age of six he began to learn the rudiments of Latin from the Rev. Mr. Edwards, the vicar of Warnham, a good old man whom he remembered with esteem. No doubt the regard and esteem felt by Shelley for country clergymen, whose sublime mission of sacrifice and self-devotion, apart from all religious dogmatism, he could not but admire, is due to this recollection. Is it paradoxical to say that there was the making of a "Vicaire Savoyard" in the author of "Queen Mab"?

At one moment of his life he had a passing thought of entering the Church.

The following narrative shows us the profoundly Christian side of Shelley's character whenever he came in contact with a purely human and moral Christianity:

"We were walking in the early summer," relates Peacock, "through a village where there was a good vicarage house with a nice garden, and the front wall of the vicarage was covered with corchorus in full flower. He stood some time admiring the vicarage wall. The extreme quietness of the scene, the pleasant pathway through the village churchyard, and the brightness of the summer morning, apparently concurred to produce the impression under which he suddenly said to me: 'I feel strongly inclined to enter the Church. . . . Of the moral doctrines of Christianity I am a more decided disciple than many of its more ostentatious professors. And consider for a moment how much good a good clergyman may do. . . . It is an admirable institution that admits the possibility of diffusing such men over the surface of the land.' I replied that in practice he would meet with too many obstacles to his aspirations. We walked on in thoughtful silence for a few minutes, and then conversed on other subjects."

However imperfect may have been the early schooling he received from the vicar of Warnham, it nevertheless bore precocious fruit in the marvellous boy, whose feats of memory were prodigious. His sister Helen describes the astonishment with which the elders of Field Place would listen to this baby of six or seven

repeating Gray's lines on "The Cat and the Gold-fish," word for word, without missing a syllable, after only once reading the verses.

At the age of eight he began to emulate Gray, and to try his strength in verse. The earliest English verses that we possess by him are entitled "Lines to a Cat," and were written, it is believed, in 1800.

At ten years old Shelley left the parental roof for the school at Sion House, Isleworth, near Brentford. His cousin Medwin was already there, and has given us precious recollections of that period of his life:

> This school, though not a "Dotheboys Hall," was conducted with the greatest regard for economy. A slice of bread, with an "idee" of butter smeared on the surface and "thrice skimmed sky-blue," to use an expression of Bloomfield the poet, was miscalled a breakfast. The supper, a repetition of the same frugal repast; and the dinner, at which it was never allowed to send up the plate twice without its eliciting an observation from the distributor that effectually prevented a repetition of the offence, was made up generally of ingredients that were *anonymous*. The Saturday's meal, a sort of pie, a collect from the plates during the week. This fare, to a boy accustomed to the delicacies of the table, was not the most attractive. . . .
>
> Exchanging for the caresses of his sisters, an association with boys, mostly the sons of London shopkeepers, of rude habits and coarse manners, who made game of his girlish-

ness, and despised him because he was not "one of them," nor disposed to enter into their sports, to wrangle, or fight; confined between four stone walls, in a playground of very limited dimensions—a few hundred yards—(with a single tree in it, and that the Bell tree, so called from its having suspended in its branches the odious bell, whose din, when I think of it, yet jars in my ears), instead of breathing the pure air of his native fields, and rambling about the plantations and flower gardens of his father's country seat — the sufferings he underwent at his first outset in this little world were most acute. Sion House was indeed a perfect Hell to him. Fagging, that "vestige of barbarous times," reigned supreme. Shelley was the victim and the scapegoat of these petty despots, who used to vent on him their ill-humours in harsh words, and sometimes even in blows. Poor Shelley! he was always the martyr, and it was under the smart of this oppression that he wrote:

A fresh May-dawn it was,
When I walked forth upon the glittering grass,
And wept, I knew not why; until there rose
From the near school-room voices that, alas!
Were but one echo from a world of woes—
The harsh and grating strife of tyrants and of foes.

And then I clasped my hands and looked around;
But none were near to mock my streaming eyes,
Which poured their warm drops on the sunny ground,
So without sham I spake: "I will be wise,
And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies
Such power; for I grow weary to behold
The selfish and the strong still tyrannise
Without reproach or check." I then controlled
My tears, my heart grew calm, and I was meek and bold.

We were about sixty schoolfellows. I well remember the day when he was added to the number. A new arrival is always a great excitement to the other boys, who pounce upon a *fresh man* with the boldness of birds of prey. All tormented him with questionings. There was no end to their mockery when they found that he was ignorant of peg-top, or marbles, or leap-frog, or hop-scotch, much more of fives or cricket. One wanted him to spar, another to run a race with him. He was a tyro in both these accomplishments, and the only welcome of the neophyte was a general shout of derision. To all these impertinences he made no reply, but with a look of disdain written in his countenance, turned his back on his new associates, and when he was alone, found relief in tears.

Shelley was at this time tall for his age, slightly and delicately built, and rather narrow-chested, with a complexion fair and ruddy, a face rather long than oval. His features, not regularly handsome, were set off by a profusion of silky brown hair, that curled naturally. The expression of countenance was one of extreme sweetness and innocence. His blue eyes were very large and prominent, considered by phrenologists to indicate a great aptitude for verbal memory. They were at times, when he was abstracted as he often was in contemplation, dull, and as it were insensible to external objects; at others they flashed with fire and intelligence. His voice was soft and low, but broken in its tones — when anything much interested him, harsh and unmodulated; and this peculiarity he never lost. As is recorded of Thomson, he was naturally calm, but when he heard of, or read of some flagrant act of injustice, oppression, or cruelty, then indeed the sharpest marks of horror and indignation were visible in his countenance.

As his port had the meekness of a maiden, the heart of a young virgin who had never crossed her father's threshold

to encounter the rude world could not be more susceptible of all the sweet charities than his. In this respect, Shelley's disposition would happily illustrate the innocence and virginity of the Muses. He possessed a most affectionate regard for his relations, particularly for the females of his family. It was not without manifest joy that he received a letter from his mother and sisters—for the two eldest he had a special fondness, and I will here observe that one, unhappily removed from the world before her time, possessed a talent for oil-painting that few artists have acquired, and that the other bore a striking resemblance in her beauty and amiability to his cousin, Harriet Grove, of whom I shall have to speak. . . . The dead languages were to him as bitter a pill as they had been to Byron, but he acquired them, as it were, intuitively, and seemingly without study, for during school-hours he was wont to gaze at the passing clouds—all that could be seen from the lofty windows which his desk fronted—or watch the swallows as they flitted past, with longing for their wings ; or would scrawl in his school-books—a habit he always continued—rude drawings of pines and cedars, in memory of those on the lawn of his native home. On these occasions, our master would sometimes peep over his shoulder, and greet his ears with no pleasing salutation.

Our pedagogue, when he was in one of his good humours, dealt also in what he called *facetiæ*, and when we came to the imprisonment of the winds in the Cave of Eolus, as described in the "Æneid," used, to the merriment of the school, who enjoyed the joke much, to indulge in Cotton's * parody on the passage, prefacing it with an observation that

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* Charles Cotton (1630–1687), known by his burlesque poems and translations. He brought out Scarron's works in English, with the title of "Scarronides; or, Virgil Travestied,"

his father never forgave him for the Travestie. . . . Shelley afterwards expressed to me his disgust at this bad taste, for he never could endure obscenity in any form.

A scene that to poor Shelley, who, instead of laughing, had made a face at the silly attempt at wit, and which his preceptor had probably observed, has often recurred to me. A few days after this, he had a theme set him for two Latin lines on the subject of *Tempestas*. He came to me to assist him in the task. Shelley, acting on a hint from me, made use of the following distich from Ovid's "Tristibus," (the doctor was acquainted only with the "Metamorphoses"):

> Me miserum ! quanti montes volvuntur aquarum !
> Jam jam tacturos sidera celsa putes.

When Shelley's turn came to carry up his exercise, my eyes were turned on the *Dominie*. There was a *peculiar* expression in his features, which, like the lightning before the storm, portended what was coming. When he came to the lines, he read them with a loud voice, laying a sarcastic emphasis on every word, and suiting the action to the word by boxes on each side of Shelley's ears. Then came the comment: "Jam, jam ! Pooh, pooh, boy ! raspberry jam ! Do you think you are at your mother's ?" Here a burst of laughter echoed through the listening benches. "Don't you know that I have a sovereign objection to those two monosyllables with which schoolboys cram their verses ? Haven't I told you so a hundred times already ? *Tacturos . . . sidera . . . celsa . . . putes*—what, do

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and "Lucian Burlesqu'd; or, the Scoffer Scoff'd." He also translated Montaigne's Essays, 1759, 3 vols.

Cotton's parodies were very popular in England; we have a copy of the fifth edition of his Virgil (1756).

the waves on the coast of Sussex strike the stars, eh?—*celsa sidera*—who does not know that the stars are high? Where did you find that epithet? In your 'Gradus ad Parnassum,' I suppose. You will never mount so high" (another box on the ears which nearly felled him to the ground). "*Putes!* you may think this very fine, but to me it is all balderdash, hyperbolical stuff" (another cuff), after which he tore up the verses, and said in a fury: "There, go now, sir, and see if you can't write something better."

Shelley passed among his schoolfellows as a strange and unsocial being, for when a holiday relieved us from our tasks, and the other boys were engaged in such sports as the narrow limits of our prison-court allowed, Shelley, who entered into none of them, would pace backwards and forwards—I think I see him now—along the southern wall, indulging in various vague and undefined ideas, the chaotic elements, if I may say so, of what afterwards produced so beautiful a world. I very early learned to penetrate into this soul sublime—why may I not say divine, for what is there that comes nearer to God than genius in the heart of a child? I, too, was the only one at the school with whom he could communicate his sufferings or exchange ideas. I was, indeed, some years his senior, and he was grateful to me for so often singling him out for a companion, for it is well known that it is considered in some degree a *condescension* for boys to make intimates of those in a lower form than themselves. Then we used to walk together up and down his favourite spot, and there he would outpour his sorrows to me, with observations far beyond his years, and which, according to his after ideas, seemed to have sprung from an antenatal life. I have often thought that he had these walks of ours in mind, when in describing an antique group he says: "Look, the figures are walking with a sauntering and idle pace, and talking to each other as

they walk, as you may have seen an elder and a younger boy at school, walking in some grassy spot of the play-ground, with that tender friendship for each other which the age inspires."

If Shelley abominated one task more than another it was a dancing lesson. At a ball at Willis's Rooms, where, among other pupils of Sala, I made one, an aunt of mine, to whom the letter No. 1 in the Appendix was addressed, asked the dancing master why Bysshe was not present, to which he replied in his broken English: "Mon Dieu, madame, what should he do here? Master Shelley will not learn anyting—he is *so gauche*." In fact, he contrived to abscond as often as possible from the dancing lessons, and when forced to attend, suffered inexpressibly.

Meanwhile, careless and idle as he appeared, Shelley was outstripping all his schoolfellows. His imagination was fed on wonderful tales and stories. He devoured every book that came in his way, especially the little sixpenny volumes bound in blue wrappers telling of fairies, giants, monsters, bandits, assassins, and magicians; amongst others was the story of "Peter Wilkins and His Flying Wives," which had a singular charm for him. For want of a school library the boys used to go secretly to a small circulating library at Brentford, and there lay in a provision of forbidden goods, including the works of Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett. But these were too tame,

too sober, too realistic for the soaring imagination of Shelley. He liked tales of thrilling adventure, of heroic and superhuman passion. The romances of Mrs. Radcliffe and of Rosa Matilda (Mrs. Byrne) were more to his taste. One of the latter, "Zofloya, or the Moor,"* influenced him much as Byron was influenced by John Moore's "Zeluco." From "Zeluco" came "Childe Harold," and "Zofloya" inspired the romances written by Shelley in his sixteenth year.

As was the case with Milton, Schiller, and Goethe, this constant dwelling on the marvellous had a decisive influence in directing the bent of his imagination. The harsh realities of life had already driven him to the realms of fiction, where he found the realisation of his youthful ideals, and we must not be surprised if at that period he had faith in prodigies, in apparitions, in the evocation of the dead. To this, indeed, he often alludes in his later works, although such childish superstitions had then lost their hold on him. But to Shelley, Poetry always remained the great enchantress, who by a touch of her wand creates another earth,

* Translated into French by Madame de Viterne, 4 vols., 1812.

another heaven, and other men, and produces at will a supernatural spell that lifts us above the dull and prosaic realities of life.

Such a state of poetical excitement, at a time when his constitution was still unformed, necessarily affected his organisation and engendered, as it were, a second intellectual life, resembling hallucination or waking dreams.

"He was subject," says Medwin, "to strange and sometimes frightful dreams, and was haunted by apparitions that bore all the semblance of reality. . . . He was given to waking dreams, a sort of lethargy and abstraction that became habitual to him, and after the fit was over, his eyes flashed, his lips quivered, his voice was tremulous with emotion, a sort of ecstasy came over him, and he talked more like a spirit or an angel than a human being."

During Shelley's second or third year at Sion House, Adam Walker, a learned astronomer, delivered some lectures and exhibited his orrery in the large hall of the academy. This was a new revelation to Shelley; he was startled at the calculations of astronomy, and delighted with the idea of the plurality of Worlds.

The infinite spaces of the heavens became full of new meanings, they were peopled by him with wonderful and superhuman beings; and his imagination began to build up, partly on scientific bases and partly on his own conceptions, that strange and wonderful cosmography which played so important a part in the greater number of his poetical creations. "Saturn," says Medwin, "which was then visible, and which we afterwards looked at through a telescope, particularly interested him, its atmosphere seeming to him an irrefragable proof of its being inhabited like our globe. He dilated on some planets being more favoured than ourselves, and was enchanted with the idea that we should, as spirits, make the grand tour through the heavens. . . . He was equally charmed with chemical experiments, particularly with the fact that earth, air, and water are not simple elements. This course of lectures ended with the solar microscope, which . . . . constituted to most of us . . . . the most attractive part of the exhibition . . . . and afterwards he made a solar microscope his constant companion." The noblest use to which he put it was, doubtless,

when one day it was pawned by him in order to pay the debts of some poor fellow.*

Towards the end of his stay at Brentford (1805) Shelley met with one of those exquisite natures towards which he was attracted by his own pure and affectionate heart. It is not uncommon—especially in England, where, owing to the system of education, family ties are easily broken, or, at the least, but little fostered—for boys to seek a substitute for home affections in school friendships, which, in such cases, become fervent. Byron, too, had been enthusiastic in such attachments. In one of his note-books he had copied the following sentence from Marmontel:

"Friendship which in the world is barely a sentiment, amounts to a passion in the cloister." †

Shelley was even more adapted than Byron

* An ingenuous and touching testimony to Shelley's generosity and tenderness of heart, is given us by his father's serving-man, Lucas, whose duty it was to accompany the boy in his rides about Field Place, and to put out his candle when he had been reading in bed. "He was so generous, that if he met with any one in distress he would give lavishly, and if he had no money of his own, he used to borrow of me." Nor did this kind-hearted generosity ever diminish.

† Moore's "Memoirs of Lord Byron," Vol. I., p. 76.

to taste the exquisite happiness of impassioned friendship, and for a short while he enjoyed that happiness at Brentford. An affection of this ideal nature sprang up between himself and a boy of the same age, whose name we do not know.

Shortly before his death he put in writing a recollection of this romantic episode of his school-days at Brentford : *

> The nature of love and friendship is very little understood, and the distinctions between them ill-established. This latter feeling—at least a profound and sentimental attachment to one of the same sex—often precedes the former. It is not right to say, merely, that friendship is exempt from the smallest alloy of sensuality. It rejects with disdain all thoughts but those of an elevated and imaginative character. I remember forming an attachment of this kind at school. . . .
>
> The object of these sentiments was a boy about my own age, of a character eminently generous, brave, and gentle ; and the elements of human feeling seemed to have been, from his birth, genially compounded within him. There was a delicacy and a simplicity in his manners inexpressibly attractive.

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* "Fragment of an Essay on Friendship." Forman, Shelley's Prose Works, II., p. 407. Mr. Dowden names as the friend to whom Shelley possibly alludes, a schoolfellow named Tredcroft, who, like Shelley, was thought a peculiar character, was possessed of considerable poetical talent, and died young.

It has never been my fortune to meet with him since my schoolboy days; but, either I confound my present recollections with the delusions of past feelings, or he is now a source of honour and utility to every one around him. The tones of his voice were so soft and winning that every word pierced into my heart; and their pathos was so deep, that in listening to him the tears have involuntarily gushed from my eyes. Such was the being for whom I first experienced the sacred sentiments of friendship. I remember in my simplicity, writing to my mother a long account of his admirable qualities, and my own devoted attachment. I suppose she thought me out of my wits, for she returned no answer to my letter. I remember we used to walk the whole play-hours up and down by some moss-covered palings, pouring out our hearts in youthful talk. We used to speak of the ladies with whom we were in love, and I remember that our usual practice was to confirm each other in the everlasting fidelity in which we had bound ourselves towards them and towards each other. I recollect thinking my friend exquisitely beautiful. Every night when we parted to go to bed we kissed each other like children, as we still were.

Up to this period in his life, tenderness, delicacy, especially moral delicacy, predominated in Shelley, together with a love of the marvellous, a tendency to reverie, and an ecstatic sense of poetry. But he was far from being, as Mr. Jeaffreson would imply, an enervated, doll-like creature, regretting his mother's apron-strings.*

* "He was a gentle English girl rather than a gentle English boy."—Vol. I., p. 68.

Endowed with feminine delicacy and sensibility, he also displayed, from earliest childhood, an unconquerable will, an unusual manliness and strength of character, and he showed a perfect consciousness of these two sides of his nature when, after shedding tears at the sight of human misery, he predicted of himself: "I will be meek and bold!" It is just because those two minds, those two sides of human nature, were united in him that he was a perfect poet. If, on the one hand, he is the poet of woman through his charm, his sweetness, and his *morbidezza*, on the other he is still more the poet of great thoughts, of strong passions, of all that is most energetic and masculine in man. To him we may apply the allegory of the mysterious Hermaphrodite, symbol of Art and Beauty kneaded and shaped by the hands of his Witch of Atlas, this Hermaphrodite being none other than himself: *

> Then by strange art she kneaded fire and snow
> Together, tempering the repugnant mass
> With liquid love—all things together grow
> Through which the harmony of love can pass;

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* "The Witch of Atlas," xxxv.—xxxvii.

And a fair Shape out of her hands did flow,
A living Image which did far surpass
In beauty that bright shape of vital stone
Which drew the heart out of Pygmalion.

A sexless thing it was, and in its growth
It seemed to have developed no defect
Of either sex, yet all the grace of both,—
In gentleness and strength its limbs were decked;
The bosom lightly swelled with its full youth,
The countenance was such as might select
Some artist that his skill should never die,
Imaging forth such perfect purity.

From its smooth shoulders hung two rapid wings,
Fit to have borne it to the seventh sphere,
Tipt with the speed of liquid lightenings,
Dyed in the ardours of the atmosphere.

CHAPTER II.

SHELLEY AT ETON—1804–1809.

SHELLEY entered Eton in July, 1804, and remained there until the end of 1809.

There was then at Eton a man whose severity has become proverbial, and old Keate's time is still spoken of in the school. Compared with him, Dr. Greenlaw's yoke was light. The boys, declared that his name was derived from χέω, I shed; ἄτη, woe. Hogg, with his habitual humour, has sketched for us the portrait of this modern Orbilius:

> Dr. Keate, the head master of Eton School, was a short, short-necked, short-legged man; thick-set, powerful, and very active. His countenance resembled that of a bull-dog; the expression was not less sweet and bewitching; his eyes, his nose, and especially his mouth, were exactly like that comely and engaging animal, and so were his

short, crooked legs. It was said in the school, that old Keate could pin and hold a bull with his teeth. His iron sway was the more unpleasant and shocking, after the long, mild, Saturnian reign of Dr. Goodall, whose temper, character, and conduct corresponded precisely with his name, and under whom Keate had been master of the lower school. Discipline, wholesome and necessary in moderation, was carried by him to an excess; it is reported, that on one morning he flogged eighty boys. Although he was rigid, coarse, and despotical, some affirm that, on the whole, he was not unjust, nor altogether devoid of kindness. His behaviour was accounted vulgar and ungentlemanlike, and therefore he was peculiarly odious to the gentlemen of the school, especially to the refined and aristocratical Shelley.

Yet, notwithstanding all his peculiarities, Dr. Keate was an excellent teacher and an upright man. "We must not hold lightly," writes one of his pupils, "the man who has flogged half the ministers, secretaries, bishops, generals, and dukes of the present century."

The scholars were worthy of the master. Fagging was an institution at Eton as well as at Sion House. Shelley, not satisfied with refusing to obey his fag-master, Matthews,* declared

* Matthews obtained some popularity through his "Diary of an Invalid." Among his older schoolfellows were Milman, John Coleridge, Summer, and Nassau Senior, the great interviewer of the men of the Second Empire.

war on the system, and stood apart from the whole school, for by declining to submit to tyranny from one, he drew on himself the hatred and vengeance of all; and the boy-tyrants, when their dearest prerogatives were assailed, made use of the same arguments against the rebel as did the privileged classes at a later date, when Shelley lifted up his voice against their hypocrisy and prejudice, and endeavoured to combat the social *fagging*, from which he would fain have delivered his country and all mankind, by reason.

At Eton his schoolfellows jeered at him, hooted him, pelted him with mud; afterwards grown men to whom he spoke of liberty, peace, and love, derided, cursed, and banished him.

"I have seen him," wrote an eye-witness of these daily scenes of cruelty, "surrounded, hooted, baited like a maddened bull, and at this distance of time (forty years after), I seem to hear ringing in my ears the cry which Shelley was wont to utter in his paroxysm of revengeful anger."

He was nicknamed Mad Shelley.

But his courage and constancy were rewarded. His tormentors were sooner wearied of their cruelty

than he of enduring and resisting it. The Eton boys recognised at last the strength and gentleness of his nature, the incontestable supremacy of his character and talents.* They unanimously bestowed on him the title of Lord High Atheist, as signifying he was the chief of the independents and contemners of the Eton gods, Dr. Keate and the higher powers of the school. This title made him still more odious to the authorities.

Happily at Windsor he met with a Mentor worthy of him, in the immediate neighbourhood of Eton. Dr. James Lind, a learned physician and chemist, who was popularly considered a kind of conjuror, became his protector, guide, and friend. Ariel had found his Prospero, and Shelley lavished on the good old man all the tenderness and affection his father had failed to win from him. He writes of him:

> This man is exactly what an old man ought to be, free, calm-spirited, full of benevolence, and even of youthful ardour; his eye seemed to burn with supernatural spirit beneath his brow, shaded by his venerable white locks; he

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* At Oxford Shelley used to exhibit with pride the books his schoolfellows had given him on his leaving Eton. Their names were duly inscribed here

was tall, vigorous, and healthy in his body; tempered, as it had ever been, by his amiable mind. I owe to that man far, ah! far more than I owe to my father; he loved me, and I shall never forget our long talks, where he breathed the spirit of the kindest tolerance and the purest wisdom.

Far from forgetting him, as Mr. Jeaffreson hints, Shelley has enshrined Dr. Lind in his verse, and has depicted him as that type of old age in which all ancient virtue and knowledge are incarnate, as well as every lovable quality which formed Shelley's ideal sage. Zonaras, in "Prince Athanase," and the aged hermit delivering Laon from prison, are but more or less idealised portraits of the poet's Eton Mentor. It is not surprising that this gentle, tolerant old man should have met with the severe censure of Shelley's enemies. In Zonaras, Mr. Jeaffreson sees only a wicked and blaspheming person, a bitter buffoon, an apothecary, a lost soul. It is thus that our French Jeaffresons have treated our great Littré. Dr. Lind's worst crime in the eyes of this critic seems to be that he did not profess so much esteem and affection for "poor old George III." as Mr. Jeaffreson considers his due!

Dr. Lind's sharp onslaughts on the royal personages of the time found, no doubt, a ready echo in the boyish, generous heart. Through a bitter experience of life Shelley's innate hatred of tyranny under whatever form — even when assuming the venerable name of father—had grown and strengthened. That this hatred may have gone so far as to make him forget the respect due to Mr. Timothy Shelley, and to allow his name to become the laughing-stock of his schoolfellows, we will not attempt to deny; but we may be allowed to offer an explanation of so singular a circumstance, and one which seems to reflect on his goodness of heart. One of the most characteristic marks of Shelley is the logical absolutism of his moral ideas. The principles of philosophy, and still more the principles of morality, ruled his mind so strongly, and his intellect was so completely swayed by their logical consequences and deductions, that he was incapacitated from taking note of the finer gradations of thought or sentiment that would have modified the rigidity and diminished the harshness of a less logical mind. Shelley could never have understood Pascal's aphorism:

"The heart has reasons that Reason does not acknowledge."

But Shelley's grievances were not merely philosophical or general. If we may believe him, Mr. Timothy Shelley incurred his hatred by endeavouring to place him in a madhouse. Even if this were a pure hallucination, as some of the poet's biographers have believed, it is certain that the idea produced a state of terror, and that it was one of the motives he habitually alleged to his friends for a frequent change of residence.

Hogg gives us Shelley's own words on the subject:

> Once, when I was very ill during the holidays, as I was recovering from a fever which had attacked my brain, a servant overheard my father consult about sending me to a private madhouse. I was a favourite among all our servants, so this fellow came and told me as I lay sick in bed. My horror was beyond words, and I might soon have been mad indeed, if they had proceeded in their iniquitous plan. I had one hope. I was master of three pounds in money, and, with the servant's help, I contrived to send an express to Dr. Lind. He came, and I shall never forget his manner on that occasion. His profession gave him authority; his love for me ardour. He dared my father to execute his purpose, and his menaces had the desired effect.

The most important result of Dr. Lind's

influence over Shelley was his initiation into the love of scientific research and the true appreciation of the fine works of antiquity. Under his guidance the young Etonian read "The Banquet" of Plato, whose "words of light" he was destined to translate at a later period, and the works of Pliny the Elder, "clear-sighted and benevolent Pliny," as he called him. The chapter "De Deo" came to him as a revelation, and doubtless sowed in his intellect the first germs of atheism. In his notes on "Queen Mab" we shall find it cited in the front rank of the authorities he brings forward. He also translated part of the "Natural History," but was stopped by the chapters on Astronomy.

In his passionate pursuit of science Shelley did not confine himself to reading. His thirst for the unknown and the marvellous led him to seek by practical experiment for the key of the mysteries of alchemy, to which he felt strongly attracted. Being in the enjoyment of greater liberty than at Brentford, he devoted himself to making all the experiments that were in his power, and for which he could find an opportunity. With his solar microscope he set fire to

a train of gunpowder, and set ablaze an old tree-stump;* at night he disturbed the whole house by upsetting a frying-pan full of chemical explosives into his fire; or he might be found in a state of ecstasy over the beautiful coloured flames of which chemistry had taught him the secret.

One of the Eton tutors, Mr. Bethell, nicknamed "Botch Bethell," in whose house Shelley boarded—"one of the dullest fellows in the place," says Packe—coming one day to Shelley's room, found him entranced before the exquisitely beautiful blue flames in which he delighted. Mr. Bethell inquired what he was about. Shelley replied he was raising the devil! The tutor thereupon seizing hold of a mysterious-looking apparatus on the table, was suddenly and violently thrown back against the wall. He had touched the handle of a highly-charged electric battery.

Shelley continued his various experiments during the holidays at Field Place, to the

* Mr. Jeaffreson expends many pages in deploring with much pathos the fate of the owner of the old stump, the responsibility incurred by Shelley's masters, and the risk of fire to the college buildings. Excellent Mr. Jeaffreson!

wondering terror of his sisters. Helen, in one of her letters, gives the following interesting account:

> I confess my pleasure was entirely negatived by terror. . . . . Whenever he came to me with his piece of folded brown packing-paper under his arm, and a bit of wire and a bottle (if I remember right), my heart would sink with fear at his approach; but shame kept me silent, and, with as many others as he could collect, we were placed hand-in-hand round the nursery table to be electrified; but when a suggestion was made that chilblains were to be cured by this means, my terror overwhelmed all other feelings, and the expression of it released me from all future annoyance. . . . His hands and clothes were constantly stained and corroded by mineral acids, and it seemed but too probable that in the rash ardour of experiment he would set the house on fire, or that he would blind, maim, or kill himself by the explosion of combustibles. He himself used to speak with horror of the consequences of having inadvertently swallowed through accident some mineral poison, I think arsenic, at Eton, which he declared had not only seriously injured his health, but that he feared he should never entirely recover the shock it had inflicted on his constitution.

The marvellous played an important part in the games invented by Shelley for the amusement of his sisters. He used to dress them up as angels, or fiends, and would entertain them with tragical and fantastic stories about the "Great

Tortoise" that had lived for ages in Warnham Pond, or the "Old Snake" that for three hundred years had inhabited the gardens of Field Place. But that which appealed most vividly to the imagination of the little girls, was the story of the alchemist Cornelius Agrippa himself. According to Shelley, this old magician lived in the flesh in a large garret, which communicated with the playroom. When his sisters' impatience to behold this mysterious being with the long beard became most eager, Shelley would calm them by promising they should see him on the day when he left the garret for the subterranean cavern they were to dig for him in the orchard.

Shelley's experiments ended by causing such anxiety to the Eton authorities, that the study of chemistry was strictly prohibited.

There is little doubt that our poet's ardour for natural and chemical science was but a superficial passion, fed, for the most part, by his love of the unknown and marvellous, but it would be unjust to attribute it with Mr. Jeaffreson solely to the "moral perversity" that attracted him

to forbidden fruit, and in which Shelley himself seems to take pride when he says, in "Laon and Cythna":*

> And from that hour did I with earnest thought
> Heap knowledge from forbidden mines of lore;
> Yet nothing that my tyrants knew or taught,
> I cared to learn. . . .

He was perfectly aware of the absence of any culture of science in the classical curriculum of Oxford; his intuitive and perspicacious genius perceived the immense field open to students of positive science, that "unjealous heiress" of the secrets of alchemy, and he was especially interested in the benefits that it must necessarily procure for the human race. We shall find him afterwards enthusiastic in the promotion of a scheme for steamers, and he would have been delighted to launch the first of these on the Mediterranean.

If Shelley is often found during his education in opposition to the teachings or the spirit of his teachers, the reason is that their spirit and those teachings appeared to him narrow, retrogressive, and inimical to all real progress. His

* Dedication, Stanza v.

only error was to have set up too high and too sublime a moral standard, and to have insisted, in spite of all opposition, on conforming his life and conduct to that ideal. In so far he was like Milton, who also had revolted against the Cambridge rules, and had refused to bear a yoke which was to him intolerable:

> Nec duri libet usque minas perferre magistri,
> Cœteraque ingenio non subeunda meo.

No diatribe of Shelley's enemies will, however, convince, when contrasted with the formal testimony in his favour offered by many of his schoolfellows, and in particular by W. G. Halliday, in the following letter, which we quote as containing the most complete portrait of the Eton boy that has come to us:*

MY DEAR MADAM,

Your letter has taken me back to the sunny time of boyhood, "when thought is speech, and speech is truth;" when I was the friend and companion of Shelley at Eton. What brought us together in that small world was, I suppose, kindred feelings and the predominance of fancy and imagination. Many a long and happy walk have I

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* The letter is dated 1857.

had with him in the beautiful neighbourhood of dear old Eton. We used to wander for hours about Clewer, Frogmore, the Park at Windsor, the Terrace; and I was a delighted and willing listener to his marvellous stories of fairyland, and apparitions, and spirits, and haunted ground; and his speculations were then (for his mind was far more developed than mine) of the world beyond the grave. Another of his favourite rambles was Stoke Park, and the picturesque churchyard where Gray is said to have written his Elegy, of which he was very fond. I was myself far too young to form any estimate of character, but I loved Shelley for his kindliness and affectionate ways; he was not made to endure the rough and boisterous pastime at Eton, and his shy and gentle nature was glad to escape far away to muse over strange fancies, for his mind was reflective and teeming with deep thought. His lessons were child's play to him, and his power of Latin versification marvellous. I think I remember some long work he had even then commenced, but I never saw it. His love of nature was intense, and the sparkling poetry of his mind shone out of his speaking eye, when he was dwelling on anything good or great. He certainly was not happy at Eton, for his was a disposition that needed especial personal superintendence, to watch, and cherish and direct all his noble aspirations, and the remarkable tenderness of his heart. He had great moral courage, and feared nothing but what was base, and false, and low. He never joined in the usual sports of the boys, and what is remarkable, never went out in a boat on the river. . . . When leaving Oxford under a cloud, he said to me: "Halliday, I am come to say good-bye to you, if you are not afraid to be seen with me!" I saw him once again in the autumn of 1814, in London, when he was glad to introduce me to his wife.

In the midst of his philosophy and scientific pursuits, the young Etonian did not neglect literature, and he manifested, in an uncommon degree, every aptitude for becoming an eminent scholar. At fourteen he knew Latin sufficiently well to write the language elegantly in prose and verse; in fact, in Latin verse he was unrivalled. Medwin has preserved for us some specimens of his talent in this line, and among others a translation of the epitaph in Gray's well-known "Elegy written in a Country Churchyard." Shelley must have written these verses with delight.* He

* Hic sinu fessum caput hospitali
Cespitis dormit juvenis; nec illi
Fata ridebant, popularis ille
Nescius auræ.

Musa non vultu genus arroganti
Rusticâ natum grege despicata;
Et suum tristis puerum notavit
Sollicitudo.

Indoles illi bene larga; pectus
Veritas sedem sibi vindicavit;
Et pari tantis meritis beavit
Munere cœlum.

Omne quod mœstis habuit misero
Corde largivit, lacrymam; recepit
Omne quod cœlo voluit, fidelis
Pectus amici.

recognised himself in more than one line of that epitaph. A youth on whom Fortune would not smile, because he despised popularity; a poet led by the Muses away from the crowd, and marked by Melancholy from childhood; a soul the abode of Sincerity; a heart whose large bounty gave to Misery all he had—a tear, and gained from heaven all he wished—a friend; this description fits Shelley to perfection, and as he penned those lines, the Eton boy must have foreseen a similar epitaph for himself.

To the study of the dead languages Shelley added that of his own, and practised himself in the composition of English prose and verse. He and his schoolfellow Amos wrote some little plays together, which they acted before another boy of the same age, who was their sole audience; and once during his holidays he and his eldest sister

> Longius sed tu fuge curiosus
> Cæteras laudes fuge suspicari;
> Cæteras culpas fuge velle tractas
> Sede tremendâ.
>
> Spe tremescentes recubant in illâ
> Sede virtutes pariterque culpæ,
> In sui Patris gremio, tremendâ
> Sede Deique.

wrote a play and sent it to Matthews the comedian, who returned the manuscript with the courteous reply that it would not do for acting.

It might not have been easy to predicate from these childish attempts the future author of "The Cenci," but it is certain that even then he loved and appreciated the "tender wisdom" of one whom he looked upon as without a rival, and set above all poets of all time—the author of *King Lear*, "the most perfect specimen of dramatic art in the world."

His mind was full of Shakespeare, and as he lightly ran up or down the stairs in Mr. Hexter's house, he would be gaily singing the rhyme of the witches in *Macbeth:*

> Double, double, toil and trouble,
> Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

Besides verse-making during his holidays from Eton, he tried to initiate his sisters into the mysteries of poetry and versification.* A good

* "His first lesson to me," writes his sister Helen, "I perfectly remember. There were several short poems, I think, of which he gave me the subject, and one line about 'an old woman in her bonny gown' (even the rhyme to which I forget) elicited the praise for which I wrote. Subsequently he had them printed, and the mistake I made about sending

many specimens of his verse at that time have come down to us. We shall find them hereafter in one of his romances.

These romances were Shelley's most important work while at Eton. His biographers and critics have, to our mind, passed over too lightly these imaginative and romantic effusions of the youthful Shelley. They cannot be ignored without leaving a blank in the history of his mental development.

The Eton romance-writer is an explanation of the Oxford atheist and the poet of "Queen Mab;" and the germ of Shelley as poet, philosopher, and moralist, is contained in novels written by him in his sixteenth year.

Some years ago a subscription was begun by Mr. Oscar Browning, then a master at Eton, to set up a bust of Shelley among the Eton celebrities. The Provost of Eton forbade it, and the subscription list, which had already reached a considerable sum, was suspended. The name of that Provost of Eton deserves to be recorded. It was Dr. Goodford.

one of my heroes or heroines out by night and day in the same stanza he would not alter, but excused it by quoting something from Shakespeare."

CHAPTER III.

SHELLEY AS A WRITER OF ROMANCE—"ZASTROZZI"—"ST. IRVYNE"—1809–1810.

WITH Shelley to conceive was to execute, whether in literature and poetry or in life. He felt an imperious need of communicating his ideal of beauty and goodness to his fellow-men; in what form mattered not so long as it conveyed his impressions faithfully. Hence his thirst for publication during the years at Eton, hence his longing that no spark of beauty or of love should be lost to the world; and endowed as he was with the faculty of appropriating everything in harmony with his own attraction towards the marvellous, the gigantic, and the supernatural, it is not surprising that he chose his models among the authors of the sublime horrors, the extravagant

tales, the romantic and sentimental ballads that were just then produced in profusion in England. He had shuddered and grown pale in reading them, and while still full of his conceptions and still palpitating with divine emotion, he attempted to make others shudder and grow pale in their turn.

In April, 1810, Messrs. Wilkie & Robinson brought out a novel entitled "Zastrozzi," * by P. B. S.

Mr. Rossetti wonders how any real live publisher was found to give forty pounds for the privilege of publishing such a rhapsody, or reviewers to criticise and expose its alleged immorality. It is, no doubt, far from being a masterpiece; it is in the blood-and-thunder style of Mrs. Radcliffe and of Lewis, and while

* "Zastrozzi" was unfavourably reviewed in the *Critical Review* for November, 1810. The only interesting point in the article is that Shelley is even then denounced as the monster of perversity who subsequently was so bitterly attacked by the *Quarterly Review* and the *Literary Gazette*. "The narrative itself, as well as the style in which it is written, is so contemptible that we should have passed it over in silence, only for the indignation excited by its gross and barefaced immorality. . . . We cannot too strongly reprobate the author. His absurd and stupid jargon cannot redeem him from infamy, or his book from the flames."

exaggerating the defects of their style, it betrays in every line the most ingenuous inexperience of literary composition, without sequence, or variety, or probability. But in judging it we must not forget that the author, when he wrote it,* was a youth of seventeen or eighteen, and on a near inspection, it is possible to discern in many passages germs of the brilliant qualities as well as of the defects that mark his early poetical works. The characters sketched out in the novel reappear in after years transfigured by the magic pen of the poet; the hero of "Zastrozzi" becomes the hero of "Laon and Cythna," and more than one episode of the novel is repeated in the poem.

After all, one feels a human heart beating through it, one hears the voice of true, strong passion, something of the stirring and tragic eloquence that bursts forth in "The Cenci."

"Though quite uncharacteristic of me as I now am," wrote Shelley three years after the appearance of "Zastrozzi," "nevertheless these romances serve to mark the state of my mind at the period of their composition." †

* "Zastrozzi" was written in 1808 and 1809.

† Letter to Godwin, 1812. He thus describes his mental

We may describe this state of mind from a moral and philosophic point of view by noting that just then Shelley was, as it were, divided between a certain admiration for the fatalism of the great passions, and the worship of heroism, or of the human will made subservient to that fatality. The sovereign principle of the moral life, self-control, he has made incarnate in his hero Zastrozzi.

Pietro Zastrozzi is the son of a certain Verezzi, an Italian count, and of Olivia Zastrozzi, who at fifteen has been seduced by him, and is afterwards cruelly deserted. Olivia on her death-bed exacts an oath of vengeance from her son. Not satisfied with driving a poniard into his father's heart, Zastrozzi vindictively pursues the young Count Verezzi, heir to that detested name, and in order to enjoy all the delights of revenge at his leisure, he employs every refinement of moral torture suggested by the most infernal ingenuity for inflicting suffering on his victim without

state: "It is to you and to your works that I owe my restoration from the state of intellectual lethargy in which I was plunged two years ago. 'St. Irvyne' and 'Zastrozzi' represented my boyish visions, which were wild without being original."

depriving him of life. The same situation occurs in Godwin's celebrated novel, "Caleb Williams," in which the hero is persecuted after a similar fashion by Mr. Falkland.

Zastrozzi seeks above all to strike Verezzi through his love. Two women are in love with him: one is Julia, Marchesa di Strobazzo, to whom Verezzi has devoted his heart and life; the other is Matilda, Contessa di Laurentini, an enchanting and hateful siren. Both are beautiful and wealthy, and burn with the same jealous and irresistible passion.

The romance opens with Verezzi on his journey to Naples, where Julia awaits him. He is at an inn at Munich, where Zastrozzi gives him a drink by which he is thrown into a heavy sleep. Two sbirri, named Ugo and Bernardo, creatures of Zastrozzi, carry the sleeping man to a carriage, and deposit him in a cavern, in a dense forest in the depths of a gloomy valley. So also, in "Laon and Cythna," Laon, separated from Cythna, as Verezzi from Julia, is borne swooning to the mysterious cavern surmounted by a pillar, where he suffers unimaginable tortures.*

* "Laon and Cythna," Canto III., Stanza 11, *et seq.*

Verezzi awakes from his stupor face to face with his foe, who orders him to follow him. They come to the iron gate of a dungeon in the rock, where the unhappy Verezzi is bound to the wall, as Laon is to the pillar. "With chains which eat into the flesh, alas! with brazen links my naked limbs they bound." Laon says:

> I gnawed my brazen chain, and sought to sever
> Its adamantine links that I might die.*

Verezzi has no support but his own reflections, which are his greatest torment, and he implores death from his tormentors. Silence is the only answer. "Days and nights seemingly countless" are passed "in the same monotonous uniformity of horror and despair. He scarcely now shuddered when the slimy lizard crossed his naked and motionless limbs. The large earth-worms, which twined themselves in his long and matted hair, almost ceased to excite sensations of horror. Days and nights were undistinguishable from each other, and . . . . were lengthened by his perturbed imagination into so many years."

Prometheus, too, bound to the rock by iron

* "Laon and Cythna," Stanzas 14 and 19.

chains, counts the moments, "divided by keen pangs, till they seemed years."

Verezzi succeeds, however, in eluding the watchfulness of his keepers, and flies by moonlight across the heath, pursued by Zastrozzi. He is miraculously saved by a gigantic pine-tree, that shelters him while sleeping, and at last reaches Passau, where he falls asleep on some stone steps in the deserted streets. He is awoke by an old woman carrying a basket of flowers to sell in the market.* Claudine (for that is her name), having just lost her son, takes pity on the unfortunate youth, and leads him home to her humble cottage, "a pleasant and cultivated spot, on a little hill overlooking the majestic Danube."

"What induced you," said he to Claudine, as in the evening they sat before the cottage door, "what induced you to make that offer this morning to me?"

"Ah!" said the old woman, "it was but last week that I lost my dear son, who was everything to me; he died by a fever which he caught by his too great exertions in obtaining a livelihood for me; and I came to the market yesterday, for the first time since my son's death, hoping to find some peasant who would fill his place,

* This episode is borrowed from "Zofloya."

when chance threw you in my way. I had hoped that he would have outlived me, as I am quickly hastening to the grave, to which I look forward as to the coming of a friend, who would relieve me from those cares which, alas! but increase with my years."

Verezzi compassionately assures her that he will not forsake her, and that it shall not be his fault if she remains in poverty.

The first part of Shelley's narrative shows us one of his favourite devices in composition: a contrast between the darkest and most terrible imaginings of a mind almost in a state of delirium, and the sweet and tender conceits of a childlike and ingenuous nature. The use of such contrasts, sometimes strained but always effective, is one of the most striking features of his genius.

Moreover, a careful attention to the scene of the action is already apparent; a description of nature is mingled with the narrative; the young writer knows when to deduce a moral, evincing a depth of thought very uncommon at his age. After describing the anger of Zastrozzi on learning that his victim has escaped, and his mad pursuit of the fugitive, he brings him before us worn out with hunger, thirst, and fatigue, but thirsting yet more for vengeance, and describes a great forest

whose gigantic tree-tops intercept the burning rays of the sun, while the moss-grown slopes beneath invite to repose.

"The sun began to decline; at last it sank beneath the western mountain, and the forest tops were tinged by its departing ray. The shades of night rapidly thickened.

Zastrozzi sat awhile upon the decayed trunk of a scathed oak.

The sky was serene, the blue ether was spangled with countless myriads of stars; the tops of the lofty forest trees waved mournfully in the evening wind; and the moonbeams penetrating at intervals, as they moved, through the matted branches, threw dubious shades upon the dark underwood beneath.

Ugo and Bernardo, conquered by irresistible torpor, sank to rest upon the dewy turf.

A scene so fair, a scene so congenial to those who can reflect upon their past lives with pleasure, and anticipate the future with the enthusiasm of innocence, ill accorded with the ferocious soul of Zastrozzi, which, at one time agitated by revenge, at another by agonising remorse or contending passions, could derive no pleasure from the past—anticipate no happiness in futurity."

Still pursuing Verezzi, Zastrozzi finds himself on a sudden, and as if by enchantment, in front of a fantastic Gothic palace, which seems to be deserted. He enters with his followers, climbs a wide staircase, and reaches a long corridor, at the end of which is a woman in white draperies

who leans on a lamp-lighted balustrade. He recognises Matilda, Contessa di Laurentini.

Just as Zastrozzi is the incarnate fiend of revenge, so is Matilda that of wild and relentless passion. She reveals herself at once, and entreats Zastrozzi to rid her of her hateful rival.

"I almost shudder," exclaimed Matilda, "at the sea of wickedness on which I am about to embark! But still, Verezzi—ah! for him would I even lose my hopes of eternal happiness. In the sweet idea of calling him mine, no scrupulous delicacy, no mistaken superstitious fear, shall prevent me from deserving him by daring acts. —No! I am resolved," continued Matilda, as recollecting his graceful form, her soul was assailed by tenfold love——."

Zastrozzi desires nothing better; the infernal passion of the furious woman will accomplish his vengeance; he departs from Italy while Matilda flies in pursuit of Verezzi.

Careless of modesty and decorum, she wanders solitary at night through the streets of Passau seeking for her beloved.

"A gloomy silence reigned through the streets of the city; it was past midnight, and every inhabitant seemed to be sunk in sleep—sleep which Matilda was almost a stranger to. Her white robes floated on the night air—her shadowy and dishevelled hair flew over her form, which, as she passed the bridge, seemed to strike the boatmen below with the idea of some supernatural and ethereal form."

Attracted by the waters of the Danube, which "reflect her symmetrical form," she is about to drown herself, when the arms of a stranger hold her back. It is Verezzi! Verezzi, whom she recognises after a brief swoon, "bending in anxious solicitude over her elegantly proportioned form."

Verezzi follows Matilda into the mysterious Gothic palace. The coldness and indifference with which he at first listens to her protestations of love, and his unchanging fidelity to Julia, only intensify the Countess's passion. Zastrozzi brings a false report of Julia's death, and Verezzi falls a prey to fever and delirium, which endanger his life. Meanwhile Zastrozzi and Matilda have frequent interviews, in which Zastrozzi endeavours to uproot every moral and religious feeling from her mind. He puts before her in the crudest terms a system of complete Epicureanism. Matilda readily accepts his theories. "Thy words," she says, "are a balm to my soul." She has but one remaining doubt—on the immortality of the soul.

"Answer me. Do you believe that the soul decays with the body; or if you do not, when this perishable form mingles with its parent earth, where goes the soul which now actuates its movements? Perhaps, it wastes its fervent energies in tasteless apathy or lingering torments."

"Matilda," returned Zastrozzi, "think not so; rather suppose, that by its own innate and energetical exertions this soul must endure for ever, that no fortuitous occurrence, no incidental events, can affect its happiness; but, by daring boldly, by striving to verge from the beaten path, whilst yet trammelled in the chains of mortality, it will gain superior advantages in a future state."

"But religion! Oh, Zastrozzi!"

"I thought thy soul was daring," replied Zastrozzi, "I thought thy mind was towering; and did I then err? . . . . Oh, yield not yourself, Matilda, thus to false, foolish, and vulgar prejudices! . . . ."

The foregoing passage, one of those, no doubt, taxed by the reviewers with immorality, is important as regards the genesis of the theology and philosophy of the poet. It contains germs of the atheism of Oxford, and the theories of "Queen Mab." If on the one hand Shelley reproves the coarse Epicureanism of Zastrozzi, he has no word of blame for his metaphysical and religious teachings; and Zastrozzi's theory of the immortality of the soul is quite the same as his own at the time. He looked upon immortality as a state of happiness which would be proportioned to the degree of energy and courage exhibited while on earth. We shall find this theory again in "Hellas."

Meanwhile Verezzi remains a prey to despair, and is near death. A physician declares that a warmer climate is his only chance of life. Matilda proposes that of Venetia, where her castle of Laurentini is situated, amid such fantastic scenery as our poet loves to depict, a mysterious forest, with overhanging granite rocks and foaming cataracts. Thither does Matilda carry her lurid passion, and there she nurses it to the soft breathings of the zephyrs and the murmuring of the pine-trees, or to the mournful music of nuns chanting their requiem for a departed sister in the neighbouring convent. The soft warmth of the climate, the impassioned attentions of Matilda, the heavenly sweetness of her voice when she sings to the accompaniment of her harp, soften and melt Verezzi's heart.

But the irrepressible passion "that beats in Matilda's veins," could not be satisfied with the sweet sympathy of feeling and thought which constitutes the love ideal of Verezzi-Shelley, and which "calms his violent emotions." Thereupon Zastrozzi again comes to her help, and suggests an infallible means of attaining her end, and of for ever effacing the image of Julia in Verezzi's

heart. This romantic plan is a feigned attack on Verezzi in the forest; Matilda throws herself before him so as to receive the blow, and is wounded.

Matilda's snowy arm was tinged with purple gore; the wound was painful, the blood streamed fast from her arm and tinged the rock . . . with a purple stain.

The stratagem succeeds to admiration; the sight of Matilda's blood melts the icy heart of Verezzi, and the lovers (still in the forest) swear eternal fidelity. "Love like ours wants not the vain ties of human laws."

This is the first appearance of the doctrine of free love, and of that of the immorality of legal sanctions; a doctrine which the poet was afterwards to practise in his own life, and which formed his most unpardonable offence in the eyes of England.

The crisis occurs at Venice. During an evening fête on the Canal, Verezzi recognises in a gondola, whose "innumerable flambeaux . . . rivalled the meridian sun," the ethereal form of his forgotten Julia.

While he is gazing in an ecstasy Julia's gondola

speeds on, and, "indistinct from distance," mocks "his straining eyeball."

Meanwhile, on their return to the little solitary house in which they are dwelling, Matilda succeeds in dispelling the despair which has seized on Verezzi at the sight of Julia.

"And are you then mine—mine for ever?" she rapturously exclaims.

"Oh! I am thine—thine to all eternity," returns Verezzi, as he raises to his lips the cup Matilda has filled for him; but on a sudden the goblet falls from his hands, he seizes his dagger. . . . Julia stands before him! She tries in vain to wrest the dagger from his grasp, he plunges it into his heart and dies.

Matilda, who, until that moment, had preserved a terrible calm, throws herself on Verezzi's breast, draws out the blood-stained poignard, and, seizing the unhappy Julia by the hair as she lies fainting on the ground near the corpse of Verezzi, she stabs her rival in the breast over and over again until not a breath remains. Exhausted by passion, she flings away the weapon, and, with fearful calmness, gazes gloomily on the terrible spectacle. Julia's "head reclined on

Verezzi's bosom, and even in death her angelic features were pervaded with a smile of affection."

At this awful moment Matilda's religious fears return to assail her, and restrain her from adding suicide to her crimes.* "And is it for this, for horror, for torments such as these, that He whom monks call All-Merciful has created me?"

In spite of her atheism she trembles at the thought of a future life, and a voice whispers to her soul: "Thou canst never die!"

In contrast with the superstitious terrors of a woman's soul, Shelley now shows us in Zastrozzi the unshaken firmness of true atheism. While Matilda, who has been summoned before the Inquisition, acknowledges, in the presence of approaching death, the falseness of Zastrozzi's arguments, and urges him to join her in repentance, Zastrozzi proudly rejects all religious belief, dies satisfied with having kept his oath, and proclaims, before judges and executioners, the negation of the Divinity.

"I intend," he says, "to meet death, to encounter annihilation, with tranquillity. Am I not convinced of the non-

* In "The Cenci" Beatrice in like manner shrinks from suicide for the same reason.

existence of a Deity? Am I not convinced that death will but render this soul more free, more unfettered? Why need I then shudder at death? Why need any one whose mind has risen above the shackles of prejudice, the errors of a false and injurious superstition?"

In "Laon and Cythna,"* Laon, face to face with the stake, speaks with more poetry and eloquence; but the thought is the same. One feels that Shelley in his heart applauds the sentiments of Zastrozzi, and admires the martyr to conscience who has for death only "a smile of most disdainful scorn." Zastrozzi is the prototype of Laon and of Prometheus.

In this same year (1809) Shelley was at work on a second romance, which was to be brought out in three volumes. "If Jock,"† he gaily writes, "will not give me a devil of a price for my new poem ('The Wandering Jew'), and at least sixty pounds for my romance, the dog shall not have them."

But "the dog" declined, and the novel passed into the hands of Stockdale.‡ It was published

* "Laon and Cythna," Canto XI., Stanzas 15-25.

† John Robinson, publisher of "Zastrozzi."

‡ This was the beginning of the debt Shelley incurred to his publisher, Stockdale, according to whom it had reached

at the author's expense in December, 1810, under the title of "St. Irvyne; or, The Rosicrucian. By a Gentleman of Oxford University." (Shelley had been at Oxford since the end of October.) In spite of the attractiveness of the title, on which the young novelist had reckoned, the book had no success, and the edition was still on the publisher's hands in 1822.

This second novel also was suggested to Shelley by a work of Godwin's called "St. Leon," "which Shelley immensely admired. He read it till he believed that there was truth in alchymy, and the Elixir Vitæ" . . . and he believed also "in the 'Panacea.' He used to cite the opinion of Dr. Franklin," and quote Condorcet on the subject.

The hero of this novel is a fresh incarnation of Shelley himself, still more transparent than the one we have discovered in "Zastrozzi." He is a young and high-souled poet, the heir of a wealthy and powerful German prince, who is

£300 in 1826. Stockdale has given an account of his relations with Shelley in some curious notes, entitled "Stockdale's Budget," which have been very impartially noticed in an article by Mr. Richard Garnett in *Macmillan's Magazine*, "Shelley in Pall Mall," II. p. 100.

separated from his country by an insurmountable barrier, and who lives only for freedom and independence. Wolfstein, such is his name, is under the mysterious influence of a kind of magician, the Rosicrucian Ginotti, who is the personification of conscience, and of the fatality of which Wolfstein is the victim.

The action of the story is double and alternate, and would be somewhat difficult to analyse; there is even less unity and sequence than in "Zastrozzi." We are taken by enchantment from Italy to Switzerland or Bohemia; the characters appear and disappear like puppets, according to the caprice of the author. Stockdale, after printing the book, discovered rather late that there was no *dénouement*, and that all the heroes of the story, like those in some fantastic ballads, vanish without leaving a trace behind.

The theories first enunciated in "Zastrozzi" are more clearly formulated in "St. Irvyne."

Wolfstein, like Verezzi, loves a noble lady, Megalena di Metastasio, whom he has saved from the hands of Alpine brigands. He takes her to Genoa, and there asks her to become his wife, but without any religious or civil ceremony.

Megalena is easily persuaded by the eloquence of her lover.

"Yes," exclaimed Megalena, "yes, prejudice avaunt! Once more reason takes her seat, and convinces me that to be Wolfstein's is not criminal. . . . . Be mine, then, and let our affection end not but with our existence!"

"Never, never shall it end!" enthusiastically exclaimed Wolfstein. "Never! What can break the bond formed by congeniality of sentiment, cemented by an union of soul which must endure till the intellectual particles which compose it become annihilated? Oh! never shall it end; for when, convulsed by nature's latest ruin, sinks the fabric of this perishable globe; when the earth is dissolved away and the face of heaven is rolled from before our eyes like a scroll then will we seek each other, and in eternal, indivisible, although immaterial union shall we exist to all eternity."

As we peruse "St. Irvyne," we cannot help tracing the history of the author written beforehand in mysterious presentiment. Shelley's life is little more than the realisation of the principal adventures of this strange romance. Like Wolfstein, he, too, is to save a young girl from the prison of school and the prison of home; he is to expound to his chosen bride the metaphysics of free and eternal love, and will lead her to share his sentiments. Like Wolfstein, he is to weary of his first choice, and will seek elsewhere for a worthier object of his love. It almost seems

to us that in depicting Wolfstein, he had either a prescience of his own future, or he identified himself by the force of his imagination so entirely with the hero of his creation, that he realised the conception in his own life. He wrote about this time to Godwin, saying: "After being a reader, I am now a writer of novels;" he might have added, "and I am about to live one."

In "St. Irvyne" as in "Zastrozzi" Shelley has contrasted the weakness of a soul terrified by superstition with the fearless serenity of a soul truly enfranchised from all prejudice, and from every religious creed. Ginotti seduces a young orphan girl whose conventual education and superstitious beliefs leave her defenceless before the fascinations of the Rosicrucian. Ginotti's theories on love and marriage are of course the same as Wolfstein's, only he expounds them still more crudely: "Why are we taught to believe that the union of two who love each other is wicked, unless authorised by certain rites and ceremonials which certainly cannot change the tenour of sentiments which it is destined that these two people should entertain for each other?"

To this question Eloise de St. Irvyne ingenuously replies that God has so willed it. Such an answer fills the Rosicrucian with indignation. "Do not you think it an insult to two souls, united to each other in the irrefragable covenants of love and congeniality, to promise in the sight of a Being whom they know not, that fidelity which is certain otherwise?"

Poor Eloise vainly exclaims: "But I do know that Being, and when I cease to know Him, may I die! I pray to Him every morning and night; I love and adore Him!"

She is overcome by the arguments of Ginotti, and falls.

The unhappy girl, after paying dearly for her weakness, and being infamously deserted by the Rosicrucian, is sheltered by an Irishman, a pattern of humane and chivalrous virtue. He too is another incarnation of Shelley, and like him is under the ban of a father's curse. He may not return to England unless formally married.

How will he act? Like Shelley at a subsequent period, he will marry, but will maintain his theory of marriage.

"I consider it a human institution; I regard

it but as a chain for the body, that still leaves the soul unfettered. It is not so with love."

Thus in "St. Irvyne" we find that the philosophical theories of Zastrozzi have become accentuated, and we approach the time when the novelist, having become a poet, will proclaim them under his own name. "Queen Mab" and "Laon and Cythna" are but their poetical development.*

Meanwhile it would appear that Shelley did not attain to his definitive convictions without a violent struggle. We see many traces in "St. Irvyne" of the strife in the poet's soul between faith and incredulity, before philosophy won the battle for the god of Lucretius and of Pliny. The pages that record this quasi-confession are marked with so much individuality, with such fervour of emotion, that it is difficult to discern nothing

* "St. Irvyne" had also its reviewers. The *British Critic* of January, 1811, concludes a brief summary thus:

"Some readers will perhaps be satisfied, and will proceed no farther. They who do, will find the cavern of Gil Blas with very little variation of circumstance, a profusion of words which no dictionary explains, such as *unevasible*, *bandit*, *en-horrored*, descriptions wilder than are to be found in Radcliffe, and a tale more extravagant than the 'St. Leon' of Godwin."

more in them than an exercise in rhetoric. Shelley's originality, besides, is so plainly marked, his intellect and style are so clearly and strongly revealed, that we have no hesitation in quoting the passage as a remarkable specimen of his earliest poetical prose.*

Poetical prose, however, no longer suffices Shelley; one of the curiosities of "St. Irvyne" is the verse scattered throughout its pages. Every character is a poet; Wolfstein, Megalena, Steindolph, a brigand, take it in turns to recite his best compositions when at Eton. The verses no doubt deserve severe criticism on the score of technical perfection when compared even with "Queen Mab," but they are none the less interesting as being the first effusions of what may be called the purely romantic period of Shelley's genius. One of them, indeed, has a peculiar interest, for we find Shelley, for the first time, anxious to emulate the great poet who was destined to become his friend—Lord Byron. "Hours of Idleness" had appeared in 1807. Shelley read the verses, and desired to emulate the young poet whose first appearance in print had so ve-

* Appendix I.

hemently aroused public attention. Two lines of "Lachin-y-Gair" remained in his memory, and he used them in the piece to which we allude. Shelley could never have imagined that one day he would be taunted with that innocent plagiarism as a dire offence,* and that the conclusion would be drawn that Byron's "Hours of Idleness" might "be styled the 'horn-book' from which he had acquired the rudiments of the art of poesy."

At a later period, Shelley more than once felt a renewed attraction towards romantic prose. Unfortunately there remain of this only a few sketches and some detached pieces, which excite our regret that the demon of verse did not suffer him to proceed farther. Those exquisite pages are like marvellously sculptured stones, waiting vainly for the master-hand that wrought them, to give them their own place in the building that is for ever suspended.

* "The Real Shelley," I., p. 166.

CHAPTER IV.

FIRST POETICAL ESSAYS AND FIRST LOVE—1809–1810.

DURING the year 1809–1810, the interval between Eton and Oxford that Shelley passed under his father's roof was full of a truly prodigious intellectual activity. He occupied himself with romances and poems, with scientific and experimental studies, with literary and metaphysical correspondence, and, nevertheless, could find leisure for journeys to Oxford and London, for shooting parties, and for endless rambles with his cousin Medwin in the enchanted forest of St. Leonard, where

> The adders never stynge,
> Nor ye nightyngales synge.

During the winter, the two cousins wrote together in alternate chapters the commencement

of an extravagant romance, in which a hideous witch played the principal part. The portrait of this witch passed from the prose tale into the verse of the "Wandering Jew," with which they occupied themselves shortly afterwards.

Medwin and Shelley had picked up at a book-stall a fragment of an English translation of the "Wandering Jew," by Christian Shubart. This fragment, full of a strange and wild eloquence, strongly impressed Shelley. His imagination was haunted by the marvellous legend, and he and his cousin set to work on a metrical romance.

When seven or eight cantos were written, Shelley sent them to Campbell * for his opinion. Campbell returned them with the comment that they contained only two good lines:

> It seemed as if an angel's sigh
> Had breathed the plaintive symphony,

"This criticism of Campbell's," says Medwin, "gave a death-blow to our hopes of immortality."

Notwithstanding Campbell's adverse verdict,

* Thomas Campbell (1777–1844), author of "The Pleasures of Hope" and of "The Last Man."

however, the manuscript was sent to Edinburgh to be printed. There it remained until July, 1831, when part of it appeared in *Fraser's Magazine*. Unfortunately that part was written by Medwin, with the exception of a song at the end of the fourth Canto, which Medwin says is Shelley's, and "extremely musical":

> See, yon opening rose
> Spreads its fragrance to the gale!
> It fades within an hour;
> Its decay is fast—is pale.
> Paler is yon maiden,
> Faster is her heart's decay;
> Deep with sorrow laden,
> She sinks in death—away.

But though Shelley's "Wandering Jew" no longer exists, we can judge by his frequent use of the legend in his poems how strongly it had taken hold of his imagination. We meet with it repeatedly in his works; in "Alastor," in "Hellas," and especially in "Queen Mab."* According to Medwin, the episode of Ahasuerus in the latter is only slightly altered from the original "Wandering Jew."

This legend of the wandering Jew, the

* Vol. I., p. 57, *et seq.* See also "Alastor."

victim of the Galilean's vengeance; another Prometheus persecuted by another Jupiter; this unmoved witness of the succession of religions and human institutions, besides being a piteous and terrible story, presented an admirable framework for the development of Shelley's favourite theme of the struggle between good and evil in the world, and the successive victories and defeats of the spirit of liberty and love among mankind. He preceded in this the French philosopher-poet, Edgar Quinet, who was inspired by the same spirit and is certainly akin to him, and whose "Ahasuerus" and "Prométhée" have been too much neglected. Some other poems written by Shelley at the same period appeared in a volume entitled "Original Poems" by Victor and Cazire, published at Horsham in 1810. The edition, consisting of fourteen hundred and eighty copies of a volume containing sixty-four pages, had a curious fate, and has so entirely disappeared that the most eager search on the part of enthusiastic Shelleyans has failed to discover a trace of it. A week after its publication, when about a hundred copies were in circulation, the publisher discovered that this collection of "original

poetry" contained a transcript from the pages of M. G. Lewis, the celebrated author of "The Monk." He immediately complained to Shelley, who, writes Stockdale, "with all the ardour incidental to his character, which embraced youthful honour in all its brilliancy, expressed the warmest resentment at the imposition practised upon him by his coadjutor, and entreated me to destroy all the copies." *

In 1808 Medwin had met a young girl in North Wales who was destined to make a mark in English poetry—Felicia Dorothea Browne, after-

* This volume, too, found reviewers. Articles were written on it both in the *Poetical Register of Fugitive Poetry* for 1810–1811, and in the *British Critic* for 1811. The first deplores the waste of paper by the two authors of this *downright scribble;* the second, while praising the type, and after quoting some of Cazire's verses, thus sums up the collection: "It consists of sentimental verses without either rhyme or reason, and of horrifying tales that are perfectly absurd." These reviews have been discovered recently by Mr. Edward Dowden, who is the author of a most interesting article on Shelley's early writings in the *Contemporary Review* for September, 1844. He conjectures, with some probability, that the name of Cazire, although the sound is feminine, may only be a disguise for that of Edward Graham, who was at that time a close friend of Shelley's, and an ardent sympathiser in his literary pursuits. Young Graham was the son of a French *émigré* of high family who had sought safety in

wards Mrs. Hemans.* The girl-author, then in her sixteenth year, had just brought out two volumes of verse, "Early Blossoms," and "England and Spain; or, Valour and Patriotism."

"It was impossible," says Medwin, "not to be struck with the beauty (for beautiful she was), the grace, and charming simplicity and *naïveté* of this interesting girl, and on my return from Denbighshire, I made her and her works the frequent subject of conversation with Shelley. Her juvenile productions, remarkable certainly for her age—and some of those which the volume contained were written when she was a mere child—made a powerful impression on Shelley, ever enthusiastic in his admiration of talent; and with a prophetic spirit he foresaw the coming greatness of that genius, which under the name of Hemans afterwards electrified the world. He desired to become acquainted with the young authoress, and using my name, wrote to her, as he was in the habit of doing to all those who in any way excited his sympathies. This letter produced an answer, and a correspondence of some length passed between them, which of course I never saw, but it is to be supposed that

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England, where he had married a lady, a direct descendant of Shakespeare. He was a clever musician and a pupil of the celebrated Woelfi, and had been taken into his house by Shelley's father and brought up by him.

* 1794–1835. Mrs. Hemans was principally a descriptive poet. She was essentially feminine in style, and was in consequence a favourite writer with women. Gentle, tender, and melancholy, she might have taken a place among the best lyric-writers of England had she written less.

it turned on other subjects besides poetry ; I mean, that it was sceptical. It has been said by her biographer, that the poetess was at one period of her life, as is the case frequently with deep thinkers on religion, inclined to doubt ; and it is not impossible that such owed its origin to this interchange of thought. One may indeed suppose this to have been the case, from the circumstance of her mother writing to my father, and begging him to use his influence with Shelley to cease from any further communication with her daughter—in fact, prohibiting their further correspondence. Mrs. Hemans seems, however, to have been a great admirer of his poetry, and to have in some measure modelled her style after his, particularly in her last and most finished effusions, in which we occasionally find a line or two of Shelley's, proving that she was an attentive reader of his works. "Poets," as Shelley says, "the best of them, are a very chameleonic race, and take the colour not only of what they feed on, but of the very leaves over which they pass."

Shelley no longer spoke of Mrs. Hemans; her rose-water lyrics must have seemed to him very vapid and colourless; the author of "Early Blossoms" had learned but little from her teacher, for in her "Sceptic" Mrs. Hemans repudiated any leaning towards the Satanic School of Poetry. Shelley probably estimated her as did Lord Byron, who in 1820 wrote: "Mrs. Hemans is a poet, but too stilted and too much given to apostrophising."

Shelley's strong convictions were henceforth

combined with a passionate ardour for proselytism. Women, as being nearer to Nature, seemed to him to offer the fairest field for the sowing of the New Gospel.* He had begun by exercising his apostolate on his sisters; to them succeeded Felicia Browne, next his cousin, Harriet Grove, and shortly afterwards Harriet Westbrook, his future wife.

Love itself was to him only a means of intellectual conquest and philosophical propagandism.

It may be asked whether Shelley was ever beguiled by mere passion, by *Venus Pandemos*, as he called it, and whether he suffered by the deplorable experience to which Thornton Hunt, one of his biographers, alludes: "Accident has made me aware of facts which give me to understand that in passing through the usual curriculum of a college life in all its paths Shelley did not go scatheless; but that in tampering with venal pleasures his health was seriously and not tran-

* Helen Shelley relates in one of her letters that her brother "had a wish to educate some child. A little acrobat who came to the back-door to display her wonderful feats, attracted him, and he thought she would be a good subject for the purpose."

siently injured. The effect was far greater on his mind than on his body."

If we admit on this uncorroborated statement of Thornton Hunt that such a misfortune did happen to Shelley, the only effect it produced was to disgust him for ever with every kind of vice, and to confirm him in the pure manner of life that even his most inveterate detractors, including Mr. Jeaffreson himself, are obliged to admit.

Prostitution was always the object of Shelley's most violent denunciation. To him it was the hateful but necessary consequence of the deviation from natural love which results from the dogmas of religion and the conventions of society, the necessary equipoise of legal prostitution, the *sine quâ non* of chastity, that virtue of people who are cheaply virtuous.

Chastity is "a monkish and evangelical superstition, a greater foe to natural temperance even than unintellectual sensuality."* There was but one remedy, he thought, for this hideous evil: a return to pure love, to the laws of natural and free love.

* Notes on "Queen Mab." See also a strong passage in "Peter Bell the Third."

The great characteristic of Shelley's theories on love (and we must bear in mind that his theories were the sole law of his conduct) was the grand principle, that in the human heart the ideal of love is inseparable from the ideal of intellect; his great quest, even at an age when the spiritual vision is ordinarily obscured by the passions, was a female soul in harmony with all the transcendent aspirations of his own, a soul which, both in intellect and heart, nay, even in action if necessary, could join in his apostolate of morality and humanity; in one word, like Balzac, he sought for a "true believer." But he always sought vainly for such a soul among the living women whom he loved.

> And some were fair—but beauty dies away ;
> Others were wise—but honeyed words betray.

It is probably among the latter that he placed Harriet Grove, his first love. Medwin has left us a charming sketch of this young cousin of Shelley's:

> She was born, I think, in the same year as himself. She was like him in lineaments—her eyes, her hair, her features, they said were like to his, but softened all and tempered into beauty. When I think of Miss Grove, and call to

mind all the women I have ever seen, I know of none that surpassed or could even compete with her. She was like one of Shakespeare's women, like some Madonna of Raffaelle's.

The cousins had not met since their early childhood until the summer of 1810. They then spent two months together; a mutual passion sprang up, and its unfortunate sequel was the first love-wound Shelley received.* Shelley initiated her into his studies, and it has even been asserted that she wrote some chapters of "Zastrozzi."

A correspondence began between them; but Harriet soon took alarm at the tone of Shelley's letters, which treated of speculative subjects and

* Charles Henry Grove, Harriet's brother, gives the following recollections of the period, in a letter dated 16th February, 1857:

"I did not meet Bysshe again until I was fifteen years old, when I left the navy, and paid a visit to Field Place, with my father and mother, Charlotte and Harriet. Bysshe had just left Eton, and was at home with his sister Elizabeth. He was at this time more attached to my sister Harriet than I can express, and I recollect well the moonlight walks we four had at Strode, and also at St. Irvings (the 'St. Irvyne' of the novel). After our visit to Field Place, we went to my father's house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, where we passed a very happy month. Bysshe was full of life and ardour, and delighted with his successful wooing of my sister."

endeavoured to shake her religious opinions; she consulted her parents, who, recognising a serious danger for their daughter in the correspondence, put an immediate end to it, and relinquished their hopes of a union between the young cousins.

It is greatly to be regretted that none of these letters of Shelley to his cousin are now in existence, nor yet any of those to Felicia Browne.* It would be curious to observe the art with which this new Abelard mingled love-talk with his discussions on philosophy and theology. On this occasion too his letters spoiled everything, and his beautiful cold-hearted cousin, forgetting the hopes she had allowed Shelley to cherish, married a wealthy Somersetshire squire in November, 1811. Bysshe suffered acutely from what he considered her infidelity. He felt justified in twice describing the cousin he had loved too well as false or untrue:

> One whom I found was dear but false to me;
> The other's heart was like a heart of stone.

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* In a letter to Hogg, Shelley protests he had no other end in view in his letters to his cousin than to discover

As Shelley's love had been passionate and profound, so the wound was deep and slow to heal. In his letters to Hogg during the Oxford vacation we catch an echo of his agony. With anguish in his soul he describes the fatal steps leading to the catastrophe.

In a letter dated Field Place, Dec. 23, 1810, he tells Hogg how his sister sometimes attempted to plead his cause with her cousin, who replied in a discreet and reasonable fashion not indicative of very vivid affection:

"Even supposing I take your representation of your brother's qualities and sentiments—which, as you coincide in and admire, I may fairly imagine to be exaggerated, although *you* may not be aware of the exaggeration—what right have *I*, admitting that he is so superior, to enter into an intimacy which must end in delusive disappointment when he finds how really inferior I am to the being which his heated imagination has painted?"

Dec. 26, 1810: "Circumstances have operated in such a manner that the attainment of the object of my heart was impossible; whether on account of extraneous influences, or from a feeling which possessed her mind which told her *not* to deceive another, not to give him the possibility o disappointment."

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whether their ideas coincided sufficiently for them to think seriously of a closer and lasting union.

Jan. 3, 1811 : "She is no longer mine! She abhors me as a sceptic—as what *she* was before!"

Jan. 11, 1811 : "She is gone! She is lost to me for ever! She is married—married to a clod of earth ; she will become as insensible herself. All those fine capabilities will moulder!"

For a moment Shelley even contemplated suicide.

At a subsequent period, when the wound was quite healed, he would recall, not without pleasure, that first unfolding of a love from which disenchanting reality had never effaced the bloom, and which remained in his heart as a scarcely unclosed bud, all untouched by the warmth of a summer sun. He must have been thinking of his fondly loved cousin in 1819, when he penned the following lines :

> And where is truth? On tombs? For such to thee
> Has been my heart; and thy dead memory
> Has lain from childhood, many a weary year,
> Unchangingly preserved and buried there.

In a fragment that has come down to us of his studies preparatory to the composition of his "Epipsychidion," he depicted the two cousins under the Italian names of Cosimo and Fiordispina :

> They were two cousins, almost like to twins,
> Except that from the catalogue of sins

Nature had razed their love, which could not be
But in dissevering their nativity.
And so they grew together, like two flowers
Upon one stem, which the same beams and showers
Lull or awaken in the purple prime.

But until these hours of serene reminiscence had struck, he felt bitterly the void left by what he calls the betrayal of his beloved cousin, and laments in heart-broken verse his desertion and his loneliness:

THE SOLITARY.

Dar'st thou amid the varied multitude
To live alone, an isolated thing?
To see the busy beings round thee spring,
And care for none; in thy calm solitude,
A flower that scarce breathes in the desert rude
To Zephyr's passing wing?

Not the swart Pariah in some Indian grove,
Lone, lean, and hunted by his brother's hate
Hath drunk so deep the cup of bitter fate
As that poor wretch who cannot, cannot love.
He bears a load which nothing can remove—
A killing, withering weight.

He smiles—'tis sorrow's deadliest mockery;
He speaks—the cold words flow not from his soul
He acts like others, drains the genial bowl
Yet, yet he longs—although he fears—to die.
He pants to reach what yet he seems to fly,
Dull life's extremest goal.

In this appalling solitude he beholds Death approaching, and offering him love and eternal rest beyond the grave:

Say, victim of grief, wilt thou slumber with me?
My mansion is damp, cold silence is there;
But it lulls in oblivion the fiends of despair.
Not a groan of regret, not a sigh, not a breath
Dares dispute with grim silence the empire of Death.
I offer a calm habitation to thee—
Say, victim of grief, wilt thou slumber with me?

Naught waits for the good but a Spirit of Love
That will hail their blessed advent to regions above;
For Love, mortal, gleams through the gloom of my sway,
And the shades which surround me fly fast at its ray.
Hast thou loved? Then depart from these regions of hate,
And in slumber with me blunt the arrows of Fate.
I offer a calm habitation to thee—
Say, victim of grief, wilt thou slumber with me?

To this reiterated call from Death the poet replies:

Oh, sweet is thy slumber! oh, sweet is the ray
Which, after thy night, introduces the day!
. . . . . .
I hoped that I quite was forgotten by all,
Yet a lingering friend might be grieved at my fall;
And duty forbids, though I languish to die,
When departure might heave virtue's breast with a sigh.
O Death! O my friend! snatch this form to thy shrine,
And I fear, dear destroyer, I shall not repine!*

* "Death: A Dialogue," 1810. The friend whose affection wins back the poet to life, and whom Shelley identifies

The serene pleasures of friendship were at that juncture, and frequently afterwards, a consolation to Shelley for the disappointments and sufferings of love.

with *Virtue* herself, was Hogg, who will soon appear in our pages.

CHAPTER V.

SHELLEY AT OXFORD—"NECESSITY OF ATHEISM"—1810–1811.

"OXFORD," says Leigh Hunt, "has not always appreciated the favours of the gods. Oxford repudiated Locke, estranged Gibbon, expelled Shelley!"

Nevertheless, when Shelley entered Oxford, the University was nominally Liberal.

Oxford was still ringing with the eloquent accents of Coppleston, the Professor of Poetry and the bold champion of his University against the attacks of the Edinburgh Reviewers, who accused her, not without reason, of representing the monastic routine of the Middle Ages in her educational system.

But we should err in complaining of Oxford's

intolerance towards Shelley; we might say of it what St. Augustine says of original sin, "Felix culpa!" for without it we might have had neither "Laon and Cythna," nor "Prometheus Unbound."

"At the commencement of Michaelmas Term," says Hogg, "that is at the end of October, in the year 1810,* I happened one day to sit next to a freshman at dinner; it was his first appearance in hall. His figure was slight, and his aspect remarkably youthful, even at our table, where all were very young. He seemed thoughtful and absent."

Thomas Jefferson Hogg, Shelley's fellow-student at Oxford, and expelled thence with him, his inseparable friend and his biographer, was too closely associated with Shelley's life for us to omit a sketch of his remarkable character. He has frequently been depicted for us as the Mephistopheles of another Faust, a kind of demon incarnate playing with the young poet as the cat plays with the mouse. There is some exaggeration in this picture; in order to appreciate

* Shelley had matriculated at University College on April 10th, 1810, returning afterwards to Eton, where he remained until the end of July.

Hogg's influence over Shelley at its true worth, we need only bear in mind that on leaving Eton the latter had already formed very decided opinions on all the great questions of philosophy and religion, and had resolved on a line of moral conduct from which nothing could have induced him thenceforth to deviate.

That Hogg and Shelley should have been mutually attracted by their very diversity is natural enough, but there were on the other hand sufficient points of contact between the man of the world, the Tory sceptic, and the Republican, the confirmed idealist, to explain their sympathy and reciprocal regard. Without taking into account the moral qualities which they shared in common, their thirst for knowledge, their love of philosophic research and literary study, a burning desire to write and to appear in print was sufficient to cause intimacy between two young men, whose maturity of mind and purity of life placed them apart from the common crowd of students. At that period Hogg had not become the positive and cynical character described by Trelawney in his "Records," despising poetry and imagination, and caring for no other

study than that of law. In the early years of his intimacy with the poet, Hogg was a fervent adept in purely literary study, and was as deeply devoted to Plato and the Greek tragedians as to Blackstone or Coke. Mr. Dowden* has conclusively proved that his leanings to the romantic were much more pronounced than his biography of Shelley would lead us to suppose.

He wrote both verses and novels. At Oxford he competed for the poetry prize, the subject being "The Dying Gladiator." He also collaborated with Shelley in the composition of "Leonora," a fiction founded on a pathetic incident in real life, and of which a considerable part was in type, when the expulsion of the friends from Oxford alarmed the printer and put a stop to the work. In 1813 he published a philosophical novel much admired by Shelley, who discerned in it the highest gifts of a novelist and a poet.

Mr. Rossetti, in our opinion, has admirably described Hogg and his book:

"This gentleman," he says, "belonged to a family of high Tories† living at Norton, near Stockton-on-Tees, and was

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* *Contemporary Review*, September, 1884.

† With his accustomed lightness, occasionally carried to

destined for the conveyancing branch of the law. . . . We can trace in his book the character of a robust *bon-vivant* and man of society, with a great contempt for bores and crotchet-mongers of all sorts, and a generally sardonic or cynical turn, the antipodes of anything 'gushing' or any revolutionary idealism, tempered, however, by a deep respect for the forms and monuments of intellect consecrated by experience. That an acute mind of this calibre should at once have accepted Shelley as a beautiful soul and heaven-born genius, and should have been inspired with a warm enthusiasm for him, such as neither radical divergences of view, nor early and final separation . . . could avail to bedim, speaks as strongly as anything for the poet's intellectual and personal fascination. . . . The aroma of personal knowledge and affection, along with the keen zest of a *raconteur* who enjoys every oddity and reinforces it in the telling, impart a peculiar charm to these Oxford reminiscences

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cynicism, Hogg speaks of his own family in regard to their politics and religion in the following terms: "As to my own family and my immediate connections, we were all persons whose first toast after dinner was, invariably, 'Church and State!'—warm partisans of William Pitt, of the highest Church, and of the high Tory party; consequently we were anything but intolerant—we were above suspicion, above ordinances. . . . My relatives felt that they had margin enough—plenty of sea-room; that whatever might be said or done, their good principles could not be doubted. . . . If the 'Age of Reason' (Paine's) had been republished by myself, or one of my earliest friends, the world would have supposed that it was put forth merely to show the utter futility, and impotence. and vanity of the author's arguments." The above gives a painful impression of the sincerity and earnestness of the religious and political convictions of the Tories of those days.

—and indeed, spite of its many flaws and perversities, to the whole 'Life,' the suppression of whose concluding portion defrauds the admirers of Shelley of their just perquisites."

For our own part, we join in Mr. Rossetti's regret; in reading Hogg we have enjoyed the humour of which he speaks, and we regret that the limits of our work do not allow us to quote more largely from him. We can understand what an attraction his original, disdainful, and exclusive intellect, his strong mind, his adamantine patience, as Peacocke says, must have had upon Shelley, who has given, in a letter to Mary Gisborne, an incisive and witty sketch of the discreet yet keen sceptic and fine scholar:

> You will see Hogg; and I cannot express
> His virtues (though I know that they are great)
> Because he locks, then barricades the gate
> Within which they inhabit. Of his wit
> And wisdom, you'll cry out when you are bit.
> He is a pearl within an oyster shell,
> One of the richest of the deep.

To return to Oxford and the commons table, where Hogg and Shelley conversed together like old acquaintances, and entered that same evening on a friendship which in spite of occasional clouds remained warm, devoted, and unchangeable to the

last. A conversation on the respective merits of German and Italian poetry, begun at table, was continued in Hogg's rooms, whither he invited the freshman to come for wine. Shelley, finding himself in company with a cultivated and kindly spirit, threw off his reserve and soon led the talk to his favourite topic of natural science.

"As I felt in truth," continues Hogg, "but a slight interest in the subject of his conversation, I had leisure to examine, and I may add to admire, the appearance of my very extraordinary guest. It was a sum of many contradictions. His figure was slight and fragile, and yet his bones and joints were large and strong. He was tall (nearly five feet eleven), but he stooped so much that he seemed of a low stature.* His clothes were expensive, and made according to the most approved mode of the day; but they were

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* De Quincey, in sketching a portrait of Shelley, relates that he remembers having seen in London a pen-and-ink likeness of the poet in his Oxford gown; the sketch exactly corresponded with a verbal description he had once heard, that "he looked like an elegant and slender flower, whose head drooped from being surcharged with rain."

Besides the portrait mentioned by De Quincey, four others are known to have been taken: an engraving of Shelley as a child, from a drawing attributed to the Duc de Montpensier, and published by Colnaghi in 1879; an oil painting by Miss Curran, an enthusiastic admirer of the poet, in 1818–19, and now in the possession of Sir Percy Shelley, his son; a water-colour by his friend Williams, that has

tumbled, rumpled, unbrushed. 'His gestures were abrupt and sometimes violent, occasionally even awkward, yet more frequently gentle and graceful. His complexion was delicate, and almost feminine, of the purest red and white; yet he was tanned and freckled by exposure to the sun, having passed the autumn, as he said, in shooting. His features, his whole face, and particularly his head, were in fact unusually small; yet the last *appeared* of a remarkable bulk, for his hair was long and bushy, and in fits of absence, and in the agonies (if I may use the word) of anxious thought, he

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now unfortunately disappeared; and lastly, a portrait in oils, painted after death by Clint, from Miss Curran's portrait, aided by the recollections of Mrs. Shelley and her friend Mrs. Williams, "a portrait," says Trelawney, "that those who knew Shelley in the last year of his life thought very like him." An engraving of the latter forms our frontispiece. Mr. Jeaffreson has followed what he calls the Shelley legend even to these portraits. He devotes ten pages to proving that not one of them is a faithful likeness of the poet, because in all of them the most distinctive feature of his face is absent—his little turned-up nose, as Mr. Jeaffreson expresses it. He cannot sufficiently sneer at the unpoetical little nose, and at the touching weakness of two women, the widow and the friend, idealising their recollections in this posthumous portrait, "and being especially desirous, that on the historic canvas he should be endowed with a nose wholly unlike the one that had been, in their eyes, the great blemish of his earthly tabernacle." Instead of his ten pages of burlesque, Mr. Jeaffreson would have done better to reproduce for us a bust of Shelley of which he speaks as still existent, and as "protesting, dumbly eloquent, against the unfaithfulness of the portraits."

often rubbed it fiercely with his hands, or passed his fingers quickly through his locks unconsciously, so that it was singularly wild and rough. In times when it was the mode to imitate stage-coachmen as closely as possible in costume, and when the hair was invariably cropped like that of our soldiers, this eccentricity was very striking. His features were not symmetrical* (the mouth perhaps excepted), yet was the effect of the whole extremely powerful. They breathed an animation, a fire, an enthusiasm, a vivid and preternatural intelligence, that I never met with in any other countenance. Nor was the moral expression less beautiful than the intellectual; for there was a softness, a delicacy, a gentleness, and especially (though this will surprise many) that air of profound religious veneration that characterises the best works, and chiefly the frescoes (and into these they infused their whole souls) of the great masters of Florence and of Rome. I recognised the very peculiar expression in these wonderful productions long afterwards, and with a satisfaction mingled with much sorrow, for it was after the decease of him in whose countenance I had first observed it."

The first meeting of these two essentially different minds, mutually attractive by their very contrast, was decisive. Hogg and Shelley could not thencefroth exist apart; they were called the inseparables.

After spending the morning in private study, Hogg habitually repaired to Shelley's room, and

* Shelley himself makes fun in his letters of what he calls "a little turn-up nose."

they frequently remained together until a late hour of the night.

If the weather were bad, they read, wrote, and conversed indoors. Their favourite studies were "Locke on the Human Understanding," Hume's "Essays," the "Dialogues" of Plato in Madame Dacier's French translation, books on logic, and the Greek, Latin, and English poets.

"The devotion, the reverence, the religion with which he was kindled towards all the masters of intellect," declares Hogg, "cannot be described. The irreverent many cannot comprehend the awe, the apathetic worldling cannot imagine the enthusiasm, nor can the tongue that attempts only to speak of things visible to the bodily eye, express the mighty emotion that inwardly agitated him, when he approached for the first time a volume which he believed to be replete with the recondite and mystic philosophy of antiquity; his cheeks glowed, his eyes became bright, his whole frame trembled, and his entire attention was immediately swallowed up in the depths of contemplation. . . .

"He was to be found book in hand at all hours; reading in season and out of season, at table, in bed, and especially during a walk; not only at Oxford, in the public walks and High Street, but in the most crowded thoroughfares of London. Nor was he less absorbed by the volume that was open before him, in Cheapside, in Cranbourne Alley, or in Bond Street, than in a lonely lane or a secluded library. Sometimes a vulgar fellow would attempt to insult or annoy the eccentric student in passing. Shelley always avoided the malignant interruption by stepping aside with his vast and quiet agility. . . .

"I have never beheld eyes that devoured the pages more voraciously than his; I am convinced that two-thirds of the period of day and night were often employed in reading. It is no exaggeration to affirm that out of the twenty-four hours he frequently read sixteen. At Oxford his diligence was exemplary, but it greatly increased afterwards. Few were aware of the extent, and still fewer, I apprehend, of the profundity of his reading; in his short life, and without ostentation, he had in truth read more Greek than many an aged pedant who, with pompous parade, prides himself on this study alone. A pocket edition of Plato, of Plutarch, of Euripides, without interpretation or notes, or of the Septuagint, was his ordinary companion; and he read the text straight forward for hours, if not as readily as an English author, at least with as much facility as French, Italian, or Spanish; and by changing the position of the words, and occasionally substituting others, he would transmute several sentences from prose to verse, to heroic or more commonly elegiac verse . . . with surprising rapidity and readiness."

In fine weather they took long walks, dining together afterwards in Shelley's rooms. They thus made acquaintance with the beautiful country round Oxford—Shotover Hill, Bagley Wood, the banks of the Thames, the hills, meadows, and woods—wandering into farms where on one occasion the poet was attacked by a ferocious dog, who tore off the skirts of his brand-new blue coat; or springing over a ruined wall into an admirably kept garden where there was no foliage save the

dark leaves of evergreens, where scarcely a single wan, autumnal flower lingered and languished; a garden that was nevertheless symmetrically arranged and scrupulously neat, and which spoke of peace and solitude, and the ministering presence of gentle human hands. Shelley loved to wander in that enchanting spot, and one day on leaving it he could not refrain from speaking to Hogg of its sacred peace, which no doubt, said he, owed its attraction to the presence of some good and beautiful woman. The beautiful woman dreamed of by Shelley is to become the Enchantress of the garden he describes in one of his most exquisite poems, "The Sensitive Plant."

In the course of these long rambles, Shelley, to Hogg's great anxiety, would frequently amuse himself by two favourite pastimes, pistol-shooting and sailing paper boats. He gave up the former out of regard for Hogg.

He particularly liked lingering on the banks of Shotover Pond, and night would sometimes overtake him, either repeating verses aloud, or in discussions with his friend on themes that had no connection with surrounding objects.

In the correct and official atmosphere of

Oxford, so original and refined a nature must of necessity have appeared strange and eccentric. Mr. Jeaffreson abounds with stories of the poet's eccentricities. His Byronic collars, turned down over a blue coat with glittering buttons; his long and bushy hair under the "little round hat upon his little round head;" his habit of reading or disputing aloud in the High Street or public places of Oxford, were sources of amusement to his fellow students. But we seek in vain for any authority to warrant the conclusion of his biographer that those eccentricities were intended to attract notice and to display his superiority. Hogg relates a charming anecdote which to Mr. Jeaffreson seems conclusive, but is in fact an admirable picture of Shelley at a time when he was deeply interested in discussing philosophy with his friend, particularly the Platonic theory of the pre-existence of souls.

"One morning," writes Hogg, "we had been reading Plato together. . . . In the middle of Magdalen Bridge we met a woman with a child in her arms. . . . 'Will your baby tell us anything about pre-existence, madam?' he asked in a piercing voice and with a wistful look. The mother made no answer. . . . 'Will your baby tell us anything about pre-existence, madam?' he repeated with un-

abated earnestness. 'He cannot speak, sir,' said the mother seriously. 'Worse and worse,' cried Shelley; . . . 'but surely the babe can speak if he will, for he is only a few weeks old. He may fancy, perhaps, that he cannot; but it is only a silly whim. He cannot have forgotten entirely the use of speech in so short a time; the thing is absolutely impossible.' 'It is not for me to dispute with you, gentlemen,' the woman meekly replied; . . . 'but I can safely declare I never heard him speak, nor any child of his age.' . . . Shelley pressed the boy's fat cheek with his fingers. . . . Shelley sighed deeply as we walked on. 'How provokingly close are those new-born babes!' he ejaculated; 'but it is not the less certain, notwithstanding the cunning attempts to conceal the truth, that all knowledge is reminiscence. The doctrine is far more ancient than the times of Plato, and as old as the venerable allegory that the Muses are the daughters of Memory; not one of the nine was ever said to be the child of Invention.'"

There was a certain audacity at that epoch in liking Plato at Oxford, and in saying so. The teaching of the schools under the name of Aristotle was held in honour exclusively, and Aldrich's* Manual contained pretty well all the philosophy that was taught at the University. Shelley's aversion from a system of pedantic logic, and arid schooling that allowed neither liberty to thought nor free sway to the imagination, may

* See an amusing allusion to the Manual in Shelley's satire, "Peter Bell the Third."

be conceived. Those professors, blindly following in the track of the Middle Ages, seemed to him ghosts from another world—"very dull people."

He was sent for one morning by one of the tutors, who wanted to talk to him about his studies. He gives the following account of the interview to his friend Hogg:

A little man sent for me this morning, and told me in an almost inaudible whisper that I must read.

"You must read, you must read," he repeated in his small voice. I answered that I had no objection. He persisted; so, to satisfy him, for he did not appear to believe me, I told him I had some books in my pocket, and I began to take them out. He stared at me, and said that was not exactly what he meant. "You must read 'Prometheus Vinctus,' and Demosthenes' 'De Corona,' and Euclid." "Must I read Euclid?" I asked sorrowfully. "Yes, certainly; and when you have read the Greek works I have mentioned, you must begin Aristotle's 'Ethics,' and then you may go on to his other treatises. It is of the utmost importance to be well acquainted with Aristotle." This he repeated so often that I was quite tired, and at last I said, "Must I care about Aristotle? What if I do not mind Aristotle?" . . . and I left him in great perplexity.

What would the poor tutor have said could he have guessed that not only did his pupil love and read Plato, but that he wrote revolutionary verses in behalf of "the dearest interests of

universal happiness," in which he wedded the spirits of Ravaillac and Charlotte Corday, and composed an epithalamium for that mystical marriage, which ends as follows :

> But what is sweeter to Revenge's ear
> Than the fell tyrant's last expiring yell ?
> Yes ; than love's sweetest blisses 'tis more dear
> To drink the floatings of a despot's knell.

This wild and incoherent rhapsody bore the following title of Hogg's invention : "Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson."

Peg Nicholson, a mad washerwoman, had attempted to stab King George III. with a carving-knife. The episode has long been forgotten ; but at that time it was fresh in every one's memory. The poor woman was still alive in Bedlam ; "but since her existence must be uncomfortable, there could be no harm in putting her to death, and in creating a nephew and administrator to be the editor of his aunt's poetical works."

Chatterton, one of Shelley's great favourites just then, had set the fashion of such literary mystifications by his pseudo-Rowley. . . .

The pseudo-Nicholson, if we may believe Hogg and Shelley himself,* had a great success, first with

* Shelley writes to Graham, Nov. 30, 1810 : "It sells wonderfully here, and is become the fashionable subject of discussion."

Munday the publisher, who agreed to bring out the volume at his own expense, and did it well, and next with the public:

> We used to meet gownsmen in High Street reading the goodly volume as they walked—pensive, with a grave and sage delight—some of them, perhaps, more pensive, because it seemed to portend the instant overthrow of all royalty, from a king to a court-card. It was indeed a kind of fashion to be seen reading it in public, as a mark of a nice discernment, of a delicate and fastidious taste in poetry, and the very criterion of a choice spirit. Nobody suspected or could suspect who was the author; the thing passed off as the genuine production of the would-be regicide. What a strange delusion to admire our stuff, the concentrated essence of nonsense!

Amid all this declamatory trash, this deluge of romantic and revolutionary effusions, there are, nevertheless, some pieces not lacking in delicate beauty and a certain Shelleyan aroma; one of these will be found in Appendix II., "Melody to a Scene of Former Times."

It is impossible to repress a smile when we remember that the same public who were rapturous over the Posthumous Fragments, afterwards disdainfully refused to glance at Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound," or his "Adonaïs."*

* Hogg's testimony must not be taken too literally. Mr. Dowden exonerates the literary public of Oxford from

Love-confidences were mingled with literary and metaphysical discussions. Shelley liked to tell his friend of the beauty and perfection of his cousin. From the cousin the conversation passed to his eldest sister, Elizabeth, whose letters, interspersed with verse, were so charming. Out of friendship for Hogg, Shelley wished to influence his sister in favour of the man he judged most worthy of her; he invited him to spend the vacation at Field Place in order that he might see her, win her heart, and make her his wife. It was a keen disappointment to Shelley that the project failed.

Immediately on reaching Field Place for the Christmas holidays in 1810, he writes to his friend Hogg:

> Stockdale has behaved infamously to me; he has abused the confidence I reposed in him in sending him my work,* and he has made very free with your character, of which he knows nothing, with my father.

Stockdale, who was no doubt quite as anxious to recover from Shelley's father the amount he had

such want of discernment by quoting from Mr. Slatter, of the publishing firm of Munday & Slatter, who describes the "Posthumous Fragments" as "a work almost still-born."

* Probably a philosophical "Dialogue," in which Shelley set forth his moral and religious theories.

expended on publishing "St. Irvyne" as he was alarmed at the infidel tendencies of the young author, had communicated with Mr. Shelley in order to warn him against his son's danger and the influence of that son's friend.

Mr. Shelley was already greatly incensed against his son by reason of the complaints of Miss Grove's relations; he discerned in the Oxford undergraduate an apostle of infidelity and impiety, and trembled for his own daughters. Remonstrances from father and mother were showered on Shelley; correspondence with his cousin was prohibited; he was forbidden to print anything more; there was even an intention of removing him from Oxford.

"I am now," he wrote to Hogg, "surrounded, environed by dangers, to which compared the devils who besieged St. Anthony were all inefficient. They attack me for my detestable principles; I am reckoned an outcast; yet I defy them and laugh at their ineffectual efforts. . . . My father wished to withdraw me from college; I would not consent to it. There lowers a terrific tempest, but I stand as it were on a pharos, and smile exultingly at the vain beating of the billows below."

These domestic altercations served but to embitter his mind, and to increase his hatred of religious intolerance. So soon as he had over-

come the first feelings of despondency, he accepted the combat, and strong in the purity of his intentions and the sincerity of his convictions, he took an oath, on what he called *the altar of perjured love*, the oath of Hannibal, to wage war to the death against the religious fanaticism that was the cause of all his suffering.

I think it is to the benefit of society to destroy the opinions which can annihilate the dearest of its ties. . . It is now that I stand in need of all my art; they drive me to have recourse to cunning.

Yet here I swear—and as I break my oaths may Infinity, Eternity blast me—here I swear that never will I forgive intolerance! It is the only point on which I allow myself to encourage revenge; every moment shall be devoted to that object, it shall be a lasting, a long revenge! Oh, how I wish I were the avenger—that it were mine to crush the demon, to hurl him to his native hell never to rise again, and thus to establish for ever perfect and universal toleration!

Under circumstances such as these, when Hogg was denounced to Shelley's father as the evil genius of his son, it was difficult to set about realising the Oxford dreams. Yet Shelley continued to encourage his friend's hopes of making Elizabeth Shelley his wife; sending him some verses she had written on the bombardment of Copenhagen, reading to Elizabeth, Hogg's letters

and Hogg's verses in which he compares Shelley to an oak, and his faithless cousin to the ivy that destroys the tree; while Hogg almost engages himself by a solemn promise. Shelley writes to him gratefully:

> How can I find words to express my thanks for such generous conduct with regard to my sister, with talents and attainments such as you possess, to promise what I ought not perhaps to have required, what nothing but a dear sister's intellectual improvement could have induced me to demand?

Towards the close of the vacation, however, Shelley's father became somewhat appeased, and in the middle of January, 1811, he condescended to argue with the youthful theologian, and confer with him as to the evidences of Christianity. It was even agreed that at Easter the terrible Hogg, so vilified by the Pall Mall publisher, should be received at Field Place.

On his return to Oxford at the beginning of 1811, Shelley resumed his old manner of life with Hogg; the prospect of a possible union between Hogg and Elizabeth drawing them still closer together. They renewed with delight their former habits of intimacy, their long vigils of study, their rambles, their reading of all sorts, their

endless arguments. In order to please his father, Shelley had promised to compete for the Newdigate Prize, the subject being the Parthenon. Mr. Shelley, delighted with his son's excellent frame of mind, called upon a friend, the Rev. Edward Dollaway, a learned antiquary, begging him to assist the young poet with his erudition. The antiquary on this wrote Shelley a long letter, enclosing him a collection of maps, notes, and documents; but the poem was never finished. A thunderbolt put a sudden end to Shelley's life at Oxford, and crushed all the hopes and plans of his father.

On matriculating at Oxford, Shelley had undertaken to respect the University Religious Tests, had subscribed to the Thirty-nine Articles, and, as Mr. Jeaffreson says, was bound to prove himself in communion with the Church of England, by receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper on certain days in his college chapel.

It is interesting to learn what was the religious system at Oxford in 1810. Mr. Jeaffreson is sufficiently explicit on this point:

> In respect to this last particular, it was usual for the academic "dons" to have regard for the religious scruples

of the undergraduates, whose consciousness of evil living made them feel they would be guilty of presumption in coming to the Lord's table. On going to the Dean of his College, or his tutor, and making confession of his unfitness to communicate, the undergraduate of light manners and tender conscience received permission to be absent from the approaching celebration, on the understanding that he made a suitable contribution to the alms gathered on the occasion for charitable uses. In most colleges it was understood that the undergraduate who thus avoided the communion should give a guinea to the offertory; a requirement to which the applicant for dispensation could not object on conscientious grounds. Hence the usage which in course of time gave occasion for the statement that the dispensation was *bought* for a guinea, and the still more perverse statement that undergraduates took the Sacrament at the University, *in order* to escape the exaction of twenty-one shillings.

It is easy to guess what Shelley must have thought of such a performance. He could pass judgment on it without having read Mary Wollstonecraft's remarks on the defective discipline and morality of our national seminaries, in her "Vindication of the Rights of Women": "What good can be expected from the youth who receives the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper to avoid forfeiting a guinea, which he probably afterwards spends in some sensual manner?"

Shelley accepted the Lord's Supper, as he had

accepted the Thirty-nine Articles, from necessity; as a philosopher, he could only laugh at it.

Openly to attack these puerile institutions would have been to court destruction; his aims were more Machiavellian. As he wrote to Hogg: "It is now that I stand in need of all my art; I am driven to have recourse to cunning." It seemed to him that the only road to success in his enterprise against religion was to arouse public opinion, to stir and fashion it, and yet not to expose himself to defeat by self-betrayal before the battle. To this end it was well to air his opinions, to disseminate them among the literary and intelligent, and to dispel torpor by direct appeals to controversy. He had practised this method, learned from Dr. Lind, at Eton, by addressing inquiries on scientific subjects to learned men, and there was now no danger of incurring a flogging from Dr. Keate, with which one of his Eton correspondents had threatened him. He would take efficient means to avoid detection this time. He experienced a secret pleasure in the thought that the mysterious blows which could not fail to hit their object, "l'Infame," would be struck from the very

sanctuary of its most fervent worshippers; he desired to effect on a smaller scale that which Voltaire had, with greater advantages and less ingenuity, effected on a larger, and in a country far readier than England, the stronghold of cant, to accept even from an anonymous hand the daring doctrines of free thought, and the revolutionary teachings of philosophy.

He entered, therefore, on the warfare, writing under various pseudonyms, even feminine names, to prelates, clergymen, and theologians, who took their correspondent for an unbeliever, or at least a sceptic. Medwin, who passed through Oxford just then, found Shelley absorbed and delighted by the incidents of these theological mystifications.

But personal correspondence was found to be too restricted. Unless his arguments were to be allowed to degenerate into barren discussions, a starting-point and programme setting forth the grounds of the whole question became a necessity. Shelley, therefore, collaborated with Hogg, and brought out his pamphlet "On the Necessity of Atheism."

This thesis, written in the form of a geo-

metrical theorem with the traditional Q.E.D., was the outcome of the meditations of the two friends, and an abridgment of their analysis in common of Hume's "Essays." It was a categorical demonstration that the existence of God could not be proved by any of the stock arguments in its favour, whether drawn from the senses, from reason, or from evidence.

The didactic tone of the work leaves no room for doubt as to Shelley's serious purpose in writing it. Hogg speaks of it more lightly as "an innocent and insignificant thesis proposed for the delectation of lovers of logomachy." But for Shelley it was a heavy piece of ordnance intended to cause much noise and destruction. He had written it with intense conviction and fervour. "I will crush Intolerance," he wrote to Hogg. "I will at least attempt it. To fail even in so useful an attempt were glorious."

So soon as the work was in print* he hastened to send copies, under the name of Jeremiah Stukeley, to all those whom he wished to draw into correspondence on the subject, explaining that "he had met accidentally with this little

* E. & W. Philipps, printers, Worthing, Sussex.

tract, which appeared, unhappily, to be quite unanswerable."

"Unless the fish," writes Hogg, "was too sluggish to take the bait, an answer of refutation was forwarded to an appointed address in London, and then in a vigorous reply he would fall upon the unwary disputant and break his bones. The strenuous attack sometimes provoked a rejoinder more carefully prepared, and an animated and protracted debate ensued."

This did not last long, however. The pamphlet had been advertised in the *Oxford Herald* on February 9, 1811, and had caused consternation in the enemy's camp. Doctors of Divinity and Masters of Arts took counsel together to stop the infamous tract so soon as it should be on sale. Without Munday & Slatter's knowledge Shelley strewed their shop-windows and counter with copies of his pamphlet, telling their shopman to sell them as quickly as possible at sixpence apiece.* One of the Fellows of New College, the Rev. John Walker, was struck by the strange title. He entered the shop, looked

* We borrow the above particulars from Mr. Dowden's "Life of Shelley."

into the pamphlet, and asked to see one of the principals. What was this poison they were vending? If they had any sense of propriety or any prudence, they would instantly destroy all the copies on which they could lay hands.

The booksellers, astonished and alarmed, hastened to follow this charitable advice, and at the blazing kitchen-fire, in presence of the Grand Inquisitor, John Walker, the *auto-da-fé* took place. At the same time they sent to Shelley, begging him to come and confer with them. Shelley arrived without delay, and an animated conversation ensued. On the one side, Mr. Munday, Mr. Slatter, and a certain lawyer named Clifford who happened to be present, representing to Shelley the error of his ways, pleading, imploring, threatening; on the other side the youthful author fearlessly defending his cause in a shrill and piercing voice, maintaining his right to free thought and free speech, and remaining to the last unconvinced and unpersuadable.

"He had done worse," he told them, "than spread his net in the sight of callow Oxford birds—worse than shock the susceptibilities of a

Fellow of New College; he had sent a copy of his pamphlet to every bishop on the bench, to the Vice-Chancellor, to each of the heads of houses, and with it a letter in his own handwriting."

This open admission delivered him up to the enemy. It was an easy matter for the Oxford authorities to recognise Shelley's handwriting in that of Jeremiah Stukeley; the Dons consulted together, and resolved on his expulsion. On March 25th, a fine spring morning, Shelley was sent for to the Common Room, where he found the Master and some of the Fellows. Immediately on his entrance, a copy of the terrible syllabus was placed before him. A few minutes afterwards he rushed into his rooms, where Hogg was waiting for him, in extreme agitation: "I am expelled!" he exclaimed in a piercing voice, "I am expelled!" Then he gave the following account to Hogg:

"I was sent for suddenly a few minutes ago. I went to our Common Room, where I found our Master and two or three of the Fellows. The Master produced a copy of the little syllabus, and asked me if I were the author of it. He spoke in a rude, abrupt, and insolent tone. I begged to be informed for what purpose he put the question. No answer

was given; but the Master loudly and angrily repeated: 'Are you the author of this book?' 'If I can judge from your manner,' I said, 'you are resolved to punish me if I should acknowledge that it is my work. If you can prove that it is, produce your evidence; it is neither just nor lawful to interrogate me in such a case and for such a purpose. Such proceedings would become a court of inquisitors, but not free men in a free country.' 'Do you choose to deny that this is your composition?' the Master reiterated in the same rude and angry voice." Shelley complained much of his violent and ungentleman like deportment, saying: "I have experienced tyranny and injustice before, and I well know what vulgar violence is; but I never met with such unworthy treatment. I told him calmly but firmly that I was determined not to answer any questions respecting the publication. He immediately repeated his demand. I persisted in my refusal, and he said furiously: 'Then you are expelled, and I desire you will quit the College early to-morrow morning at the latest.' One of the Fellows took up two papers and handed one of them to me; here it is." He produced a regular sentence of expulsion, drawn up in due form, under the seal of the College.

Hogg instantly addressed a note, which Mr. Jeaffreson calls *impudent*, but which we should rather characterise as *courageous*, to the Master and Fellows, in which he begged them to reconsider their decision with regard to Shelley.

I wrote a short note to the Master and Fellows, in which I briefly expressed my sorrow at the treatment my friend had experienced, and my hope that they would reconsider their

sentence. The note was despatched; the conclave was still sitting; and in an instant the porter came to summon me to attend, bearing in his countenance a promise of the reception which I was about to find.

Hogg followed Shelley's example; he refused to answer the questions of the Master, and instantly received a sentence of expulsion.

On the morning of March 26th, 1811, Percy Bysshe Shelley and Thomas Jefferson Hogg left Oxford for London.

It is in vain for Oxford to try and cleanse herself from the stain she incurred in expelling Shelley; vain are her present efforts to appeal from the verdict of public opinion, and Mr. Jeaffreson's dull pleadings serve only to deepen the stigma that rests upon the venerable University.

Mr. Rossetti is the mouthpiece of all that is intellectual and liberal in England when he writes:

> In this case as in others, the honestest and boldest course is also the safest; and we shall do well to understand once for all that Percy Shelley had as good a right to form and expound his opinions on theology, as the Archbishop of Canterbury had to his.

It is easy to perceive, as Mr. Jeaffreson says, that Mr. Rossetti is not an Oxford man!

CHAPTER VI.

SHELLEY IN LONDON, AT FIELD PLACE, AND AT CWM ELAN—ELOPEMENT WITH HARRIET WESTBROOK—1811.

THE two exiles reached London at dusk, and the next morning they settled in lodgings at No. 15, Poland Street. "The name attracted Shelley; it reminded him of Thaddeus of Warsaw and of freedom." The furnished lodging-house appears to him like an enchanted palace; he was "fascinated by a gaudy wall-paper of vine-trellises and grapes which adorned the parlour; and vowed he would stay there for ever." Every new impression was with him so vivid, that he imagined it must endure "for ever." Less than a month had elapsed, and Hogg having left him, the enchantment vanished, and he abode "alone in the

vine-trellised chamber, where he was to remain a bright-eyed, restless fox amidst sour grapes."

Mr. Shelley was horrified at his son's expulsion, and his first thought was to endeavour to separate him from his evil genius. To this end he had corresponded with Hogg's father, requesting him to come and lecture "his young man;" he had next written from an hotel to his son, stating as the conditions of forgiveness that Shelley must immediately return to Field Place, must cease all intercourse with Mr. Hogg, and continue his studies privately under a master he would himself select. He reserved to himself the task of converting the young unbeliever by means of Paley's "Natural Theology." "I shall read it with him," he writes in melancholy mood to Hogg senior; "a father in such case will have more influence than a stranger." Meanwhile he invited the two rebels to dine with him at his hotel. On the 7th April, 1811, Hogg and Shelley, before presenting themselves at dinner in accordance with the invitation, took a long ramble together, during which Shelley read aloud some passages from a book criticising the Old Testament and ridiculing the Jews and their religion.

Mr. Shelley received his guests with friendly courtesy; but presently began to bluster, not unkindly, and to grumble, swear, laugh, and cry all at once.

"What do you think of my father?" asked Shelley, aside, of his friend.

"That is not your father," replied Hogg; "he is the God of the Jews, the Jehovah you were reading about."

Shelley was so tickled by the reply that, bursting into irrepressible laughter, he slipped from his chair and lay stretched on the floor, to the entire stupefaction of his father, and of Graham, who was present. At this moment dinner was announced. Mr. Graham pulled Shelley to his feet, and they dined amicably. After dinner Shelley's father took Hogg aside and held a serious conversation with him, in the course of which Hogg advised him philosophically to get his son married as soon as possible. After tea, religion was introduced.

"There is certainly a God," said the Squire of Field Place; "there is no doubt as to the existence of the Deity." Then, as no one disputed the proposition, the Squire, turning suddenly on

Hogg, said: "Have you, sir, any doubt on the subject?"

"None."

"If you had, I could prove it to you in a minute."

"I have no doubt."

"But perhaps you would like to hear my argument?"

"Very much."

"I will read it to you, then," cried the Squire, drawing from his pocket a sheet of letter-paper whereon he had jotted down a few arguments taken from Paley's "Natural Theology."

"I have heard this argument before," said Shelley in a low voice to Hogg.

"They are Paley's arguments," said Hogg.

"Yes, you are right, sir," said the Squire, returning the paper to his pocket. "They are *Palley's* arguments, I copied them out of Palley's book this morning myself; but Palley had them originally from me; almost everything in Palley's book he had from me."

The prospect of studying Paley with the Squire as his Egeria was not calculated to fascinate Shelley. He replied to proposals from his

father that he had resolved to remain in Poland Street, and that nothing in the world would induce him to give up Hogg. Thereupon the Squire drew his purse-strings tight and forbade him his house.

Amid all these conflicts and perplexities Shelley was not losing his time. While continuing his studies and discussions with Hogg, he was familiarising himself with the immense city, which his imagination represented to him in ages to come as a "habitation of bitterns, shapeless and nameless ruins."* In company with Hogg, with his cousin Charles Grove, or with Medwin, he wandered through the streets and parks of London; through Kensington Gardens, the secluded parts of which—and especially one dark nook planted with old yew-trees—delighted him; through St. James's Park, where the sight of military evolutions elicited angry outbursts against standing armies and their danger to liberty; and by the green banks of the Serpentine, where he delighted in sailing flotillas of paper boats. On one occasion, about this time, he might have been found declaiming at the British

* Dedication of "Peter Bell the Third."

Forum,* a Radical club; on another, after hearing the great preacher, Rowland Hill, at Surrey Chapel, and comparing his dramatic talent to that of Kean or Kemble, he addressed a letter to him proposing to occupy his pulpit and address his congregation. He also regularly attended, with his cousin, the great Abernethy's anatomical lectures at St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

At this period he even thought of entering the medical profession. These various projects hardly accorded with the views of Mr. Shelley, and his patron the Duke of Norfolk, who wished him to enter Parliament. If he felt any enthusiasm for politics, it was quite in an opposite direction to the aristocratic Liberalism of moderate Whigs like his father. The miserable state of England at that time was not likely to reconcile him to Royalty, whose luxury and indifference, when contrasted with the severe sufferings of the people, presented a spectacle alike painful and grotesque. Shelley was moved by it to

* "He made so good a speech," says Grove, "that when he left the room, there was a rush to find out who he was, and to induce him to attend there again." Shelley evaded their enthusiasm by giving them a false name and address.

alternate tears and laughter. On June 19th, 1811, a grand ball was given at Carlton House by the Prince Regent, afterwards George IV., in honour of the Bourbon *émigrés*. They were received by the Prince sitting under a crimson canopy of state, and passed from the Privy Council Chamber to the sky-blue satin room, decorated for the occasion with fleurs-de-lys. In the banqueting hall the great table extended to the length of two hundred feet, and through a groove in the table ran a stream of pure water flowing from a silver fountain, the banks of which were covered with green moss and aquatic flowers. Gold and silver fishes swam in mid-stream. At the end of the table, above the fountain, sat, on a throne of crimson velvet, the Prince Regent in a field-marshal's uniform, wearing a wig with a long queue, a large diamond ornament in his hat, a jewelled sword by his side. The grace and elegance of his manners were in perfect harmony with this theatrical costume. The sole question which occupied the minds of the company was whether the Countess of Clonmel or Mrs. Thomas Hope bore away the palm for splendour of attire.

We may imagine the exhilarating effect on

Shelley when he read the account of such extravagant folly in the *Morning Herald.* He remembered it more than once afterwards when writing "Queen Mab," and "Swellfoot the Tyrant," describing the luxury and magnificence of the Royal table: "The price and pains which its ingredients cost might have maintained some dozen families a winter or two." *

His sense of humour was keenly touched by this Royal farce; and he purposed celebrating it in lyrical form. He wrote to his friend Graham, the musician, asking his co-operation:

"If, Graham, within that democratical bosom of thine yet lingers a spark of loyalty, if a true and firm King's man ever found favour in thy sight, if thou art not totally hardened to streamlets whose mossy banks invite the repose of the wanderer—if, I repeat, yet thou lovest thy rulers, and kissest the honeyed rod—then, Graham, do I conjure thee by the great George, our King, by our noble Prince Regent, and our inimitable Commander-in-Chief—then do I conjure thee by Mr. Clarke, the Duke of Kent, and Lord Castlereagh, together with Lord Grenville, that thou wilt assist me (as heretofore thou didst promise) in my loyal endeavour to magnify, if magnification be possible, our noble Royal Family. . . . Thou hast a harp of fire, and I a pen of honey. Let then the song roll—well, let it roll! Take thou thy tuning-fork, for the ode is coming."

The letter closes with a translation of the first verse of the "Marseillaise."

* "Swellfoot the Tyrant," Scene 2.

The ode came, and was immediately printed. Only a few insignificant lines are now in existence. Shelley amused himself by flinging copies into the carriages of persons who called at Carlton House.

On April 18th, Hogg had regretfully left his friend, and started for York, where he was to study the legal profession. Shelley missed him sorely, and his first letters are full of grief and despair. Relations with his father were still much strained. When by chance Mr. Shelley happened to meet his son, he acknowledged his salutation by a look "dark as a thunder-cloud," and a majestic "Your most humble servant." "Father," writes Shelley, on April 29th, "is as fierce as a lion again. . . . He wants me to go to Oxford to apologise to the Master, etc. No, of course. . . . I don't know where I am, where I will be. Future, present, past, is all a mist; it seems as if I had begun existence anew under auspices so unfavourable. Yet no, that is stupid."

So long as his father did not relent towards him, Shelley subsisted in London by the help of money from Hogg, on the sums sent him in secret by his sisters (he had proudly refused

all help from his mother), or on that given him by his uncle, Captain Pilfold, a brave and jovial sailor, who considered it more creditable to be expelled from Oxford than to have gained the Newdigate. By way of return, Shelley "illuminated" him. The good uncle, with the help of the Duke of Norfolk, contrived to appease the wrath of the "lion" of Field Place; Mr. Shelley allowed himself at last to be persuaded, and agreed to receive his son at home once more. Next he made him an allowance of £200 a year, with permission to live wheresoever he preferred, on condition, however, of keeping apart from Hogg.

Two hundred a year! It was more than Shelley hoped or wished for. "What is money to me?" he writes to Hogg. "What does it matter if I cannot even purchase sufficient *genteel clothes?* I still have a shabby great-coat, and those whose good opinion constitutes my happiness would not regard me the better or the worse for this or any other consequence of poverty. Fifty pounds per annum would be quite enough."

During the few weeks of his sojourn at Field

Place in May and June, Shelley sorrowfully discovered a complete change of feeling in his sister Elizabeth. She had been serious, contemplative, affectionate, enthusiastic, despising the world, but she was now apathetic to everything except the trivial amusements and despicable intercourse of restrained conversation, "bowing before that hellish idol, the *world;* appealing to its unjust decisions in cases which demand a trial at the higher tribunal of conscience. Yet I do not despair; what she *once was* she has a power to be again, but will that power ever be exerted?" She looked upon her brother and his friend as mad. *Matrimony* had become "the subject of her constant and *pointed* panegyric. It was monstrous!" Hogg felt incredulous; it seemed blasphemous to doubt Elizabeth's divine excellence. "Why, then," wrote Shelley, "not come and judge for yourself? Come *incognito,* my dear friend. I have two rooms in this house exclusively my own; you shall share them with me, you will be like a State prisoner. You must only walk with me at midnight for fear of discovery. My window commands a view of the lawn, where you will

frequently see an object that will repay your journey—the object of my fond affections. I will meet you at midnight at the Horsham coach; and will return with you to York."

The project of a clandestine journey did not commend itself to Hogg, and Shelley found himself reduced to solitude. "I am a perfect hermit, not a being to speak with! I sometimes exchange a word with my mother on the subject of the weather, upon which she is irresistibly eloquent; otherwise all is deep silence!" The silent gloom of a home that in earlier days had echoed to the joyful games of his childhood filled Shelley with dark anticipations. "Why should we linger on the earth? My dearest hopes are fled. . . . She whom I had hoped to unite to Hogg is unworthy of him. . . . I have been thinking of Death and Heaven for four days. Where is the latter? Is there a future life? Whom should we injure by departing? Should we not benefit some? I was thinking last night, when from the summer-house I saw the moon just behind one of the chimneys, if she alone were to witness our departure?"

Elizabeth's desertion was one of the deep sorrows of Shelley's life, and at the same time increased his horror of bigotry and intolerance.

There could be but one consolation, another female heart to take the place of the lost sister; and this he found, while on a visit to his uncle Pilfold at Cuckfield, in the person of the poor schoolmistress of the neighbouring village of Hurstpierpoint. One of the Captain's daughters was among her pupils. Miss Elizabeth Hitchener thenceforth became Shelley's ideal of the valiant woman, the feminine apostle whom he afterwards celebrated as Cythna in the "Revolt of Islam."

At a somewhat later period, but while still in a state of enthusiastic admiration for his chance acquaintance, he writes: *

She is a woman with whom I have become intimate on account of her excellent qualities. Though deriving her birth from a very humble source, she contracted during youth a very deep and refined habit of thinking; her mind, naturally inquisitive and penetrating, overstepped the bounds of prejudice; she formed for herself an unbeaten path of life. Under the patronage of a singularly liberal mind, this woman, when twenty years of age, became mistress of a school. She concealed not the uncommon modes of think-

* Letter to Godwin, July, 1812.

ing which she had adopted, and publicly nstructed youth as a Deist and a Republican. When I first knew her, she had not read "Political Justice," yet her life appeared to me in a great degree modelled upon its precepts. Such is the woman who will shortly become a member of our family.

From the first day of their acquaintance, in fact, Shelley had but one thought: to withdraw Miss Hitchener from her humble avocations, and attach her to himself as a soul necessary to his soul. Thenceforth he would confide all his thoughts to her keeping, and would disclose the inmost sanctuary of his being. On his departure from Cuckfield he left with his uncle various books for her use: a copy of Southey's "Curse of Kehama," Ensor's "National Education," and Locke's "Essay on the Human Understanding." On his return to Field Place, he at once entered into a polemical correspondence with his newly-made friend, embracing all the great metaphysical, religious, and moral problems in which he was absorbed.*

Shelley also engaged in another correspondence while at Field Place with the two Miss

* About fifty of these letters are in existence. They are of the utmost importance to the history of Shelley's mind during 1811–1812.

Westbrooks, one of whom, the younger by fourteen years, was destined shortly afterwards to become his wife.

We must retrace our steps to make acquaintance with the Westbrooks. "Jew" Westbrook, as he was called, was a rich tavern-keeper in Mount Street, and besides selling food and drink at the bar, he lent money in his back-parlour to customers; and with the help of his wife, formerly a cook, he had made a large fortune by the two trades. So soon as his means permitted, he had removed his family to a private house in Chapel Street, and had provided his daughters with the education of young ladies. Thus the younger of the two was at Mrs. Fenning's school at Clapham at the same time as Mary and Helen Shelley. During the Oxford vacation Shelley's sisters had spoken with enthusiasm of their school-fellow, Harriet Westbrook; they admired her beauty and loved her for her gay and gentle disposition. She was in truth a charming child, whose faults of impatience or temper were forgotten in her bright smile. She was the favourite pupil, a capricious and lovely doll. Helen Shelley, who saw her for the last time

in 1811, has traced her portrait in these words:

> She was a very handsome girl, with a complexion quite unknown in these days—brilliant in pink and white—with hair quite like a poet's dream, and Bysshe's peculiar admiration. Mrs. Fenning and the under-mistresses used to remark upon her beauty, and often said she might enact Venus in a *fête champêtre*. Her eyes, like Shelley's, were blue and prominent, and her hair light brown.

She acquired a still deeper interest in Shelley's eyes from a hidden melancholy of temperament —often speaking of suicide, but so calmly that her hearers had ceased to be alarmed by her words. This depression of spirits, forming so strong a contrast to the bright and playful disposition of the fair Venus, was attributed to the sorrows caused by her father's tyranny. Trelawney relates that on one of Shelley's visits to Clapham, he found the young girls discussing Harriet's trials with her father; and that having himself suffered deeply from paternal tyranny, he conceived a generous passion for the interesting victim; and his sisters seeing no means of rescuing her, Shelley exclaimed on a sudden: "Well, then, I will marry her!" He considered

his imprudent exclamation as binding, and kept his word.

Shelley's first acquaintance with Harriet dated from January, 1811. At the end of the Christmas holidays, his sister Mary had given him a letter of introduction to the Westbrooks, and a present for her friend, of which he was to be the bearer. In the course of the month, Shelley, on returning to Oxford, had forwarded to Harriet a copy of his novel of "St. Irvyne," by the perusal of which she could study at leisure the doctrines of Free Love, and imbibe the delicious poison of the poetic loves of Eloisa and Fitzeustace. It was probably in return for this attention, that she subscribed to a volume of poems by Miss Janetta Philipps,* a young writer warmly patronised by the poet.

A close correspondence between Harriet and Shelley ensued.

Miss Westbrook completed her conquest of the poet by confiding to him the unreasonable and tyrannical treatment she received from her

* The book was brought out in 1811, under the title of "Poems by Janetta Philipps, Oxford," and was preceded by a list of subscribers, among whom the names of Shelley and Harriet Westbrook appear for the first time together.

parents, and her wretchedness in an atmosphere where there were none whom she could love; Shelley endeavoured to console her by raising her tone of mind, and uprooting all her superstitions. He soon conquered her first scruples. Harriet was fascinated, and easily forgot the repugnance she had at first felt for the atheist, whose fame as such had reached even the Clapham school. Shortly after her marriage (March, 1812), Harriet gives to a friend—Miss Hitchener—an account of this part of her life, whose tragic ending lends a touching interest to her letter.

Why does my dear friend continually mislead herself, and thus apply to my judgment, which is so inferior to her own? 'Tis true you have mixed more in the world than myself. My knowledge has been very confined on account of my youth, and the situation in which I was placed. My intercourse with mankind has, therefore, been much less than you may imagine. When I lived with my father I was not likely to gain much knowledge, as our circle of acquaintance was very limited, he not thinking it proper that we should mix much with society. In short, we very seldom visited those places of fashionable resort and amusement which, from our age, might have been expected. 'Twas but seldom I visited my home, school having witnessed the greater part of my life. But do not think from this that I was ignorant of what was passing in the great world: books and a newspaper were sufficient to inform me of

these. Though then a silent spectator, yet did I know that all was not as it ought to be. I looked with a fearful eye upon the vices of the great, and thought to myself 'twas better even to be a beggar, or to be obliged to gain my bread with my needle, than to be the inhabitant of those great houses, when misery and famine howl around.

I will tell you my faults, knowing what I have to expect from your friendship. Remember my youth, and if any excuse can be made, let that suffice. In London, you know, there are military, as well as everywhere else. When quite a child I admired these red-coats. This grew up with me, and I thought the military the best as well as most fascinating men in the world—though at the same time I used to declare never to marry one. This was not so much on account of their vices, as from the idea of their being killed. I thought, if I married any one, it should be a clergyman. Strange idea this, was it not? But being brought up in the Christian religion, 'twas this first gave rise to it. You may conceive with what horror I first heard that Percy was an atheist; at least, so it was given out at Clapham. At first I did not comprehend the meaning of the word; therefore when it was explained I was truly petrified. I wondered how he could live a moment professing such principles, and solemnly declared that he should never change mine. I little thought of the rectitude of these principles, and when I wrote to him I used to try to shake them—making sure he was in the wrong, and that myself was right. Yet I would listen to none of *his* arguments, so afraid I was that he should shake my belief. At the same time I believed in Eternal Punishment, and was dreadfully afraid of his supreme Majesty the Devil. I thought I should see him if I listened to *his* arguments. I often dreamed of him, and felt such terror when I heard his name mentioned. These were the effects of a bad education

and living with Methodists. Now, however, this is entirely done away with, and my soul is no longer shackled with such idle fears.

After Shelley's expulsion from Oxford, one of his first visits in London had been to Mrs. Fenning's school, and Harriet took the opportunity of her own frequent visits to her parents at Chapel Street to convey to Bysshe the money sent him by his sisters. He improved his acquaintance with the Westbrooks, and particularly with Harriet's elder sister Eliza, who subsequently acted so odious a part in the poet's home. Her thoughts were now centred on becoming the sister-in-law of a future baronet, and Shelley suffered himself to be bewitched by this feminine fiend.

No sooner had Hogg left London than Shelley received a visit from the two sisters at his lodgings. In his letters to Hogg he dwells complacently on the goodness and kindness of the elder Miss Westbrook, and on the progress of his anti-religious instructions to the two girls. "The fiend, the wretch shall fall!" he writes on the 28th of April. 'Harriet will do for one of the crushers, and the eldest (Eliza) with some taming will do too."

He took frequent walks with them in the

neighbourhood of the Clapham "prison-house" wherein poor Harriet was pining away. Eliza artfully contrived as many interviews as possible; on one occasion Shelley hastened to Chapel Street on her invitation, where he found the poor captive suffering from a severe headache. Eliza left him in her sister's sole company until a late hour of the night.

"My poor little friend has been ill," he writes to Hogg; "her sister sent for me the other night. I found her on a couch, pale; her father is civil to me, very strangely; the sister is too civil by half. She began talking about *l'Amour*. I philosophised, and the youngest said she had such a headache that she could not bear conversation. Her sister then went away, and I stayed till half-past twelve. Her father had a large party below, he invited me; I refused. The two sisters are both very clever, and the youngest (my friend) is amiable. Yesterday she was better; to-day her father compelled her to return to Clapham, whither I have conducted her."

On their way thither, Harriet confided to Shelley the persecution she had to endure on his account, and the disdain with which she opposed her schoolfellows' cruelty. It is intelligible that such a confession must have alike inflamed Shelley's hatred of intolerance, and his love for the courageous girl.

Shelley's lessons were so fruitful, that the girl-freethinker soon became suspected on account of her advanced ideas, and was shunned by her schoolfellows, who called her an "abandoned wretch." Helen Shelley alone stood by her, and such courageousness delighted her brother, who writes to Hogg: "She would be a divine little scion of infidelity if I could get hold of her." Helen was then thirteen, and Harriet sixteen. The little poems sent to Hogg at this period are expressive of Shelley's feelings at the time:

LOVE.

Why is it said thou canst not live
  In a youthful breast and fair,
Since thou eternal life canst give—
  Canst bloom for ever there—
Since withering pain no power possessed,
  Nor age to blanch thy vermeil hue,
Nor Time's dread victor, Death, confessed,
  Though bathèd with his poison-dew?
Still thou retain'st unchanging bloom,
Fixed, tranquil even in the tomb.

And oh! when on the blessed, reviving,
  The day-star dawns of Love,
Each energy of soul surviving
  More vivid soars above,

Hast thou ne'er felt a rapturous thrill,
Like June's warm breath athwart thee fly,
O'er each idea then to steal,
When other passions die?—
Felt it in some wild noonday dream,
When sitting by the lonely stream
Where silence says "Mine is the dell,"
And not a murmur from the plain,
And not an echo from the fell,
Disputes her silent reign.

(*April*, 1811.)

TO ——

O thou
Whose dear love gleamed upon the gloomy path
Which this lone spirit travelled, drear and cold,
But swiftly leading to those awful limits
Which mark the bounds of time, and of the space
When time shall be no more—wilt thou not turn
Those spirit-beaming eyes, and look on me,
Until I be assured that earth is heaven,
And heaven is earth?

(1811.)

TO A STAR.

Sweet star, which gleaming o'er the darksome scene,
Through fleecy clouds of silvery radiance fliest!
Spanglet of light on evening's shadowy veil,
Which shrouds the daybeam from the waveless lake,
Lighting the hour of sacred love, more sweet
Than the expiring morn-star's paly fires!
Sweet star! when wearied Nature sinks to sleep,
And all is hushed—all save the voice of love,
Whose broken murmurings swell the balmy blast

Of soft Favonius, which at intervals
Sighs in the ear of Stillness—art thou aught but
Lulling the slaves of interest to repose,
With that mild pitying gaze?—Oh! I would look
In thy dear beam till every bond of sense
Became enamoured!

(1811.)

In the middle of July, 1811, Shelley relinquished his previous intention of joining Hogg at York,* and went on a visit to his cousin Thomas Grove, at Cwm Elan in Radnorshire, in hopes of meeting the Westbrooks at Aberystwith, where they were about to spend part of the summer. But while looking forward to the happy moment which should reunite him to Harriet, he fell into one of those states of despondency which all his stoicism could not subdue, and in which even the charms of Nature failed to afford enjoyment.

"This is most divine scenery," he writes to Hogg, "but all very dull, stale, flat, and unprofitable; indeed this place is a very great bore. I am now with people who, strange to say, never *think*. I am all solitude. . . . I must stay here, however, to recruit my finances, compelled now to acknowledge poverty an evil. . . . I do not see a soul; all is gloomy and desolate. I amuse myself, however, with reading Darwin, climbing rocks, and exploring this scenery.

* His father had written to him, "Go, if you please, to York, but not with my money."

In his letters to Miss Hitchener he discussed politics and sociology. Equality—is it attainable? If unattainable, yet is it not an ideal towards which society may perpetually advance? . . . . With a juster distribution of happiness and wealth, of toil and leisure, would not crime and the temptation to crime almost cease to exist? Would not the rich man himself be better off if free from the passions and evils to which his hereditary fortune predestines him? While replying to these questions with a conviction that such a paradise of equality need not be a visionary one, he could not refrain from casting a sorrowful and prophetic glance at the actual state of affairs, and the sanguinary conflicts that must needs arise sooner or later between the extremes of poverty and wealth, owing to the fatal effects of the present system.

He illustrated this to Miss Hitchener by a striking anecdote, which, when related by him, becomes symbolic of a high school of morality.

My window is over the kitchen. In the morning I threw it up, and had nearly finished dressing, when "For the love of charity" met my ear. These words were pronounced with such sweetness, that on turning round I was surprised

to find them uttered by an old beggar, to whom in a moment the servant brought some meat. I ran down to give him something. He appeared extremely grateful. I tried to enter into conversation with him—in vain! I followed him a mile, asking a thousand questions. At length I quitted him, finding by this remarkable observation that perserverance was useless: "I see by your dress that you are a rich man. They have injured me and mine a million times. You appear to me well-intentioned, but I have no security of it while you live in such a house as that, or wear such clothes as those. It would be charitable in you to leave me."

Meanwhile Shelley waited in vain for the letter which was to summon him to Aberystwith.

Mr. Westbrook had brought his daughters so far as Condowell; but there he suddenly retraced his steps and returned to London, with the intention of placing Harriet once more at the Clapham School. Harriet immediately acquainted Shelley with the plan, on which he endeavoured to befriend her by addressing an eloquent letter to her father; this failed, however, to soften the tyrant. Harriet then threw herself entirely on Shelley's protection, declaring she was ready to fly with him whithersoever he would. Shelley's scruples vanished before such devotion, and hearkening rather to the biddings of chivalrous sentiment than to those of love, or, as he himself described it after the event,

"more" from "exerted action than inspired passion," he sacrificed himself, not without melancholy forebodings, and accepted enthusiastically a duty exacted from him by the sufferings and love of her who had placed herself in his hands.

In the first glow of feeling he writes to Hogg:

> Her father has persecuted her in a most horrible way by endeavouring to compel her to go to school. She asked my advice: resistance was the answer, at the same time that I essayed to mollify Mr. Westbrook in vain! and in consequence of my advice *she* has thrown herself upon my protection. . . . Gratitude and admiration all demand that I should love her *for ever*. . . . We shall have £200 a year; when we find it run short we must live, I suppose, upon love! . . . We shall see you at York.

Shelley hastened to London, where he found Harriet ill and undecided. Instigated doubtless by Eliza, she wished to make sure of her future position by a formal marriage. This was also the advice of Hogg, who was an ardent partisan of lawful matrimony. Shelley yielded to the opinion of his friend; he was perfectly indifferent on his own account to the views of the world, he only yielded to considerations of Harriet's interests and happiness. "A woman's happiness

is fragile, all too easily shattered, and therefore to be guarded against shock or stroke." He knew also "how useless" it was "to attempt by solitary and isolated examples to renovate the face of society, until reason shall have worked so radical a change that the experimenter may disregard vexations from the results, and place himself above the prejudice with which his opinion would be met by the immense majority."

On August 15, 1811, he writes to Hogg: "I am become a perfect convert to matrimony, not from temporising but from *your* arguments."* A promise of marriage was therefore given to both the sisters, and only money was wanting to carry out the elopement. Shelley borrowed twenty-five

* "The *one* argument, which you have urged so often with so much energy, the sacrifice made by the woman, so disproportioned to any which the man can make this alone can justify me, were it a fault, for my hesitating submission to your superior intellect. . . . My father is here, much astonished probably to see me in London. He will soon be more so."

According to some letters to Miss Hitchener quoted by Mr. Dowden, Shelley spent a few days in August both at Field Place and at Cuckfield, where he again met his friend, and announced to her his intention of entering the "profession of physic." But he was soon recalled to London by a pressing letter from Harriet.

pounds from the father of his cousin Medwin. Finally, after several secret interviews between the lovers in the presence of Charles Grove, one fine morning in August (Saturday, the 24th, says Mr. Dowden) Harriet Westbrook stepped lightly and gaily into the hackney-coach waiting for her at a coffee-house door in Mount Street, the two cousins sprang in beside her, and the coach-wheels rattled towards the Bull and Mouth, where the trio waited all day for the departure of the Northern mail.

CHAPTER VII.

SHELLEY AT EDINBURGH, YORK, AND KESWICK — MOMENTARY RUPTURE WITH HOGG — SHELLEY AND SOUTHEY—1811–1812.

At midnight the mail-coach stopped a few minutes at York, and Shelley wrote a hurried note to Hogg: "Harriet is with me. We are in a slight pecuniary distress. We shall have seventy-five pounds on Sunday; until then, can you send ten pounds?" Hogg did better than send the loan, he started himself for Edinburgh.

During their journey Bysshe and Harriet had met with a young Scots advocate, who had explained to them the necessary steps for contracting marriage according to Scots law. Then on their arrival in Edinburgh they had found excellent rooms, and a good-humoured landlord

who agreed to advance them money, on the one condition that Shelley should treat himself and his friends to a supper. The supper accordingly took place, but was nigh to ending with a tragedy. The landlord's roystering friends proposed to invade the rooms of the new-married pair at midnight; and Shelley, in extreme indignation, caught up his pistols and threatened to use them if they ventured on such a liberty. The marriage was solemnised on August 28th, between "Percy Bysshe Shelley, *farmer*, Sussex, and Miss Harriet Westbrook, daughter of Mr. John Westbrook, London."

When Hogg arrived, the wedding was over. Mr. Timothy Shelley had soon been informed of the great event, and was highly indignant; he instantly cut off the supplies, and Shelley waited in vain for his quarterly allowance of £50, due in September. His uncle Pilfold enabled him to pay his debts, and to him it was due that he did not remain "chained to the mud and *commerce* of Edinburgh." Shelley's father next broke out into lamentations addressed to the elder Mr. Hogg, for it was presumed "that Bysshe having set off for Edinburgh with a young female, may

stay at York on his way, and God only knows what may happen if your young man and my young man should meet!"

Hogg's arrival was the crowning joy of Shelley's happiness, and the five weeks spent by the trio in Edinburgh were weeks of Eden-like felicity. Hogg was dazzled with Harriet's beauty; he can scarcely paint her in sufficiently bright colours, or with sufficiently tender touches:

> If it was agreeable to listen to her, it was not less agreeable to look at her; she was always pretty, always bright, always blooming. Without a spot, without a wrinkle, not a hair out of its place.

He frequently escorted her in her walks; together they visited Holyrood Palace and Arthur's Seat. He was shocked at the insensibility of the inhabitants of the northern metropolis to the charms of his youthful companion:

> I went abroad with her there more frequently, but nobody ever noticed her; she was short, and slightly and delicately formed—not raw-boned enough for the Scottish market.

After breakfast, of which Shelley's share often consisted of bread and honey, the morning was

passed in study: Shelley translating a treatise of Buffon (probably "Les Èpoques de la Nature"), while Harriet was at work in a similar way on a novel by Madame Cottin, "Claire d'Albe."* The afternoon was devoted to walks, and on their return from these, a little serving-maid, whose unmusical Northern accent was agonising to Shelley, would announce that tea was ready. Tea-time was spent in philosophical conversation; after which Harriet would begin to read aloud in her clear, sweet voice. "Télémaque" and "Bélisaire" were her favourite books.†

In spite of the charm lent to Fénélon and Marmontel by Harriet's clear voice, Shelley frequently yielded to "innocent slumbers" which gave serious offence to the fair reader. Before retiring to rest the three friends would stroll out to admire the stars, or perhaps the famous comet of 1811. On one Sunday Shelley was induced by

* The novels of Madame Cottin, which were so popular, especially with women, at the beginning of the century, were then in their first vogue. "Harriet," says Hogg, "rendered the two volumes exactly and correctly; and wrote the whole out fairly, without blot or blemish, upon the smoothest, whitest, finest paper, in a small, neat, flowing, and legible feminine hand."

† "She had the clearest pronunciation I ever heard."

Hogg to attend divine service in the kirk. "I never saw Bysshe so dejected," says Hogg; " . . . he looked the picture of perfect wretchedness; the poor fellow sighed piteously as if his heart would break." Yet he volunteered to be present at the evening Catechism. The extraordinary accent with which the catechist put his questions to his young neophytes: "Wha was Adam? . . . Wha's the deil?" threw him into a fit of laughter that forced him to leave the church. On another occasion he incurred the severe reproof of a serious Scotchman, by his wild and noisy gaiety in the streets on the Sabbath day.

When their means began to be exhausted, the trio returned to York, travelling by post-chaise. The weather was rainy, and Harriet, to make the journey pleasanter, read aloud from one of Holcroft's novels,* which seemed anything but amusing to Shelley; he derived much more pleasure from the childlike speeches of his young bride, whose wonder was excited by every novelty on the journey, and who, as a "little Cockney," was so ignorant of the objects of country life that she had to learn from him the difference between

* A popular novelist and comic author of the time.

a field of barley and a field of turnips. When the horses were changed, and Hogg busied himself about the luggage, Shelley would vanish. Once at Berwick, all was ready to start, but Bysshe was missing; Hogg went in pursuit, and found him "in a drizzling rain, gazing mournfully at the wild and dreary sea, with looks not less wild and dreary." The travellers reached York on a rainy evening in October. The young couple found lodgings, "and stayed for about ten days at the house of the Misses Dancer, Coney Street, the dingy dwelling of two dingy old milliners, fatal as the Valkyriæ, two of the Fatal Sisters not unworthy of a place in the Edda, who were manifestly designed to sew shrouds, hem winding-sheets, and make mouldering dresses for the dead."*

Shelley felt little of that interest in the ancient city of York, and its Christian antiquities, which would have been excited in a mind less full of abstract theories, and more mindful of the moral and æsthetic teachings of history. The marvellous

* "York at that time," says Hogg, "was in many respects a poor city; rich only in ecclesiastical and civic pride—and it was not easy to find good lodgings."

Minster appeared to him but a huge monument of the barbarism of the Middle Ages.

"When I contemplate these gigantic piles of superstition," he writes to Miss Hitchener (October, 1811), "when I consider, too, the leisure for the exercise of mind which the labour which erected them annihilated, I set them down as so many retardations of the period when Truth becomes omnipotent. All these useless ornaments are exertions of bodily labour which, though trivial separately considered, when united destroy a vast proportion of this invaluable leisure. How many things could we do without!"

Shelley was occupied with other cares, above all with anxiety about the means of living. Ten days had passed away at York, and his father made no sign of loosening his purse-strings, and Shelley resolved on seeking an interview with him in order to come to terms.

"I had thought," he wrote to Miss Hitchener, "that this blind resentment had long been banished to the regions of dulness, comedies, and farces, or was used merely to augment the difficulties and consequently the attachment of the hero and heroine of a modern novel. I have written frequently to this thoughtless man [his father], and am now determined to visit him, in order to try the force of truth; though I must confess I consider it nearly as hyperbolical as 'music rending the knotted oak.'"

The journey to Sussex offered him, besides, some prospect of pleasure in a visit to Miss

Hitchener, with whom his relations had become closer, more confidential, and more intimate since his marriage with Harriet. Miss Hitchener had received the news of his union with a woman so much his inferior with generous kindness, and had expressed the sincerest wishes for the happiness of both. Shelley's gratitude was boundless; he felt that he could now open his heart without reserve to his incomparable friend; he could tell her that he loved her with the love of a soul for a soul—that love which is subject neither to time, nor change, nor death, and which is the clearest proof of our immortality. He felt it rather embarrassing to explain to so disinterested and superior a woman that money was the motive of his visit to Sussex. "But even the consideration of money may be ennobled by the thought that the true use of wealth is to procure freedom for those we love, and who will apply their freedom to high ends." "Ought he not to share his fortune with *her* who is the sister of his soul, and with *him* [probably Hogg] who is its brother? Surely these have a right to it!"*

* Letters to Miss Hitchener, October, 1811. Miss Hitchener had the good feeling to refuse the offered share;

Full of these thoughts, Shelley announced to Hogg his intention of proceeding to Sussex in search of money, nor could he be dissuaded by his friend's sensible advice from undertaking the journey. He departed, leaving his young wife to the guardianship of Hogg, and exposed to the suspicions which so delicate a position must inevitably arouse among her immediate neighbours.* During Shelley's absence, Harriet spent long and lonely days in her own room at York. "Even when it was fair," says Hogg, "she did not go out, having unfortunately transplanted her London notions of propriety to York; she considered it incorrect to walk in the streets of that quiet city by herself, where all eyes were attracted by her beauty." Hogg came to see her of an evening, when they talked together of her husband or her family, or Harriet read aloud from Holcroft or Robertson. Suddenly, four-and-twenty hours before the return of Shelley,

all she asked was that Shelley would put aside a certain sum to provide for the old age of Miss Adams, her first instructress and "the mother of her soul."

* Mr. Jeaffreson devotes a full page to detailing the hundred and one solutions by which the old milliners may have tried to account for Shelley's sudden departure.

Eliza Westbrook appeared upon the scene. The elder sister had only been waiting for an opportunity of taking the young couple under her guardianship, and she had now found it in Harriet's forsaken condition at York. Harriet had frequently spoken to Hogg of her sister's beauty; he was consequently surprised to find her face "seamed with the small-pox," her eyes dull and meaningless, her "beautiful hair" heavy and coarse, her features thin and unlovely. From the first moment of their meeting, Eliza and Hogg were enemies; they exchanged looks of aversion and dislike, and each set about endeavouring to oust the other. Hogg at once scented danger to the married pair in the presence of this shrew in their household; and, in fact, her arrival was followed by a sudden reversal of the habits of the little circle.

"The house lay, as it were, under an interdict," writes Hogg. "All our accustomed occupations were suspended; study was forbidden; reading was injurious; to read aloud might terminate fatally; to go abroad was death, to stay at home the grave. Bysshe became nothing; I, of course, very much less than nothing. . . .

"Harriet still existed, it was true; but her existence was to be in future a seraphic life, a beatific vision, to be passed exclusively in the assiduous contemplation of Eliza's infinite

perfections. Before the angelic vision, we had never heard of Harriet's nerves, we had never once suspected that such organs existed; now we heard of little else. 'Dearest Harriet, you must not do that; only consider the state of your nerves! Whatever will become of your poor nerves? What would Miss Warne say?'"

Shelley's journey into Sussex had brought him naught but disappointment. He had had, indeed, the happiness of meeting Miss Hitchener at the house of his uncle Pilfold; but his father had not yielded to the "force of truth," and, worse still, refused to give any pecuniary help without promises of submission and amendment.

Hogg's first counsel to his friend was to send Eliza Westbrook back to London without delay. But Shelley was desirous of conciliating his father-in-law, the use of whose purse was needful at that time, and judged it inexpedient to make a declared enemy of Eliza. Hogg, however, continued to display his hostility to the unfortunate kill-joy, even in the presence of Harriet.

"Eliza," he tells us, "spent a great deal of her time in her bedroom. I asked Harriet what that dear Eliza did alone there? 'Does she read?' 'No.'—'Does she work?' 'Never.'—'Does she write?' 'No.'—'What does she do then?' Harriet came quite close to me, and answered

in a whisper, lest peradventure her sister should hear her, with the serious air of one who communicates some profound and weighty secret, 'She brushes her hair!' . . . One day, whilst the guardian angel kept on brushing, we brushed off, and wandered to the river. We stood on the high centre of the old Roman bridge; there was a mighty flood; father Ouse had overflowed his banks, carrying with him timber, and what not. 'Is it not an interesting, a surprising sight?'—'Yes, it is very wonderful. But, dear Harriet, how nicely that dearest Eliza would spin down the river! How sweetly she would turn round and round like that log of wood! And, gracious Heaven, what would Miss Warne say?' She turned her pretty face away and laughed—as a slave laughs who is beginning to grow weary of an intolerable yoke. . . . I had sometimes spoken of my intention of paying a visit to the English lakes, which visit had been exchanged for the matrimonial trip to Edinburgh. The image of lakes, mountains, rocks, and waterfalls, and of the like picturesque and romantic objects which those districts present, at once took entire possession of light minds. The young couple became in an instant as to their whole souls, demoniacally possessed by the Genius of the Lakes, and it was impossible to exorcise them, to cast out the mischievous spirit, either by prayer, or fasting, or in any other manner—not even by bell, book, and candle; more especially since their Guardian Angel, smirking in silence, no doubt favoured the sudden fancy."

Hogg was invited, for manners' sake, to accompany the trio. He explained in his most humorous language that his affairs required his presence at York; that November was not the right season for an excursion out of the way

of everybody and everything; that Skiddaw, Helvellyn, Derwentwater, and Lodore would still be there next summer; Southey and Wordsworth as well . . . and even the asses they had so gloriously apostrophised and so sweetly sung. "We must go to Keswick, go thither at once and remain there *for ever!* Impossible to remain any longer in such an unpoetical, uninspiring hole as York; and you, Hogg, you yourself will soon rejoin your friends at Keswick and stay with them for ever!"

Great was Hogg's surprise when, on going to their lodgings one evening to dinner, he found the birds flown. An illegible pencilled note informed him that his friends had gone to Richmond, and invited him to join them there.

Were this part of Shelley's life only known to us through Hogg's narrative, we might justly accuse the former of strange inconstancy towards that "friend of his soul" from whom he had sworn nothing should separate him. Fortunately for us, and unfortunately for Hogg, there are other accounts, which, owing to the revelations of Mr. Dowden, throw complete light on this painful incident in Shelley's history. The following facts

are derived from Shelley's hitherto unpublished letters to Miss Hitchener.

On Shelley's return to York he noticed that Harriet's attitude towards his friend was greatly changed, and that she regarded him with dislike. He inquired into her reasons, and discovered that his beloved friend had endeavoured to seduce his wife. The first advances had been made immediately after their removal to York, and he had renewed his hateful attempts during the absence of Shelley. Harriet had recalled him to reason and to duty, on which Hogg, acknowledging his weakness and error, had offered, by way of expiation, to write to Shelley and confess all to him. Harriet had opposed this plan, fearing the effects of such a communication on the mind of the poet, and on the following day Shelley had returned.

What a blow for Shelley! What must be thought of the human race, if that superior being, "made," as he said, "to give laws to us poor creatures who crawl here below," could be capable of such a cowardly act? But it was impossible; it was a mistake; his friend was the victim of prejudice—he could not be wholly lost!

Shelley determined to seek an explanation with Hogg.

"We walked to the fields beyond York," he writes to Miss Hitchener. "I desired to know fully the account of this affair. I heard it *from him*, and I believe he was sincere. All that I can recollect of that terrible day was that I pardoned him—fully, freely pardoned him; that I would still be a friend to him, and hoped soon to convince him how lovely virtue was; that his crime, not himself, was the object of my detestation; that I value a human being not for what it has been, but for what it is; that I hoped the time would come when he would regard this horrible error with as much disgust as I did. He said little; he was pale, terror-struck, remorseful. Oh, it is terrible! . . . This stroke has almost withered my being. Were it not for the dear friend whose happiness I so much prize, which at some future period I may perhaps constitute—did I not live for an end, an aim, sanctified, hallowed—I *might* have slept in peace. Yet no, not quite that; I might have been a colonist in Bedlam. Never shall that intercourse cease which has been the day-dawn of my existence, the sun which has shed warmth on the cold, drear length of the anticipated prospect of life! . . . I could have borne to die, to die eternally with my once-loved friend. I could coolly have listened to the conclusions of reason; I could have unhesitatingly submitted. Earth seemed to be enough for our intercourse; on earth its bounds appeared to be stated, as the event hath dreadfully proved. But with *you*, your friendship seems to have generated a passion to which fifty such fleeting, inadequate existences as these appear to be but the drop in the bucket, too trivial for account. With you, I cannot submit to perish like the flower of the field; I cannot consent that the same shroud which shall moulder around these perishing

frames shall enwrap the vital spirit which hath produced, sanctified—may I say *eternised?*—a friendship such as ours."

Under such circumstances as these, it was needful for Harriet's sake to part from Hogg; Shelley did not hesitate, and they started for Keswick.

Whatever Hogg might say, he could have felt little surprise at the sudden departure of the Shelleys, and in place of humorous remarks on the Cumberland Lakes and the ass celebrated by Wordsworth, he had to face a situation in which he played Werther to the Albert and Charlotte of Shelley and Harriet.

He despatched one despairing letter after another to his friends, imploring Harriet's forgiveness, without which he says he will blow his brains out at her feet. He entreats to be once more admitted to their friendship; and hurt alike by his friend's generosity and by his refusal, he appeals to the conventional feeling of honour, and offers reparation by a duel. Shelley rejects the proposal with horror; "he has no right either to take the life of another, or to risk his own." Hogg thereupon takes up his own defence, alleging the

violence of his passion and his high sense of honour. A correspondence lasting five or six weeks, to which Harriet herself contributed, ensued.*

A curious fragment has been preserved for us in Hogg's "Life of Shelley," under the title of "Fragment of a Novel," in which Shelley, says his ingenious biographer, proposed to write a sequel to Goethe's "Werther," but wherein the reader easily discerns the situation, and recognises the true actors in the drama under their assumed names of Albert, Werther, and Charlotte.

There were three great attractions for Shelley in Cumberland, namely, the picturesque scenery of that English Switzerland, the society of the Duke of Norfolk, and that of the Lake poets, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey, whose fame was increasing day by day.

Towards the end of November the trio reached Keswick, a town lying in the heart of the mountains, near the lakes of Derwentwater and Bassenthwaite, both of which are visible from the garden

* It is unfortunate that we possess none of Harriet's letters on this subject. Hogg, who boasts of his correspondence with her, states that he has lost them, "although he vaguely remembers to have placed them aside," but has forgotten with what intention.

of Chestnut Cottage, where our travellers installed themselves. The sublime calm of the magnificent scenery brought peace to Shelley's troubled soul.

"I have taken," he writes to Miss Hitchener on November 23rd, 1811, "a long *solitary* ramble to-day. These gigantic mountains piled on each other, these waterfalls, these million-shaped clouds tinted by the varying colours of innumerable rainbows hanging between yourself and a lake as smooth and dark as a plain of polished jet—oh, these are sights attunable to the contemplation! . . . I have been thinking of you and of human nature. Your letter has been the partner of my solitude—or rather I have not been alone, for you have been with me." And in a later letter: "These mountains are now capped with snow. The lake, as I see it hence, is glassy and calm. Snow-vapours, tinted by the loveliest colours of refraction, pass far below the summits of these giant rocks. The scene, even in a winter's sunset, is inexpressibly lovely. What will it be in summer? What when you are here?"

But the scenery was spoilt for Shelley by the inhabitants.

"Though the face of the country is lovely," he wrote to Miss Hitchener on January 7th, 1812, "the *people* are detestable. The manufacturers, with their contamination, have crept into the peaceful vale and deformed the loveliness of nature with human taint. The debauched servants of the great families who resort contribute to the total extinction of morality. Keswick seems more like a suburb of London than a village of Cumberland. . . . Strange prejudices have

these country people. I must relate one very singular one. The other night I was explaining to Harriet and Eliza the nature of the atmosphere, and to illustrate my theory I made some experiments on hydrogen gas, one of its constituent parts. This was in the garden, and the vivid flame was seen at some distance. A few days after Mr. Dare entered our cottage and said he had something to say to me. 'Why, sir,' said he, 'I am not satisfied with you. I wish you to leave my house.' 'Why, sir?' 'Because the country talks very strangely of your proceedings. Odd things have been seen at night near your dwelling. I am very ill-satisfied with this. Sir, I don't like to talk of it. I wish you to provide yourself elsewhere.' I have with much difficulty quieted Mr. Dare's fears. He does not, however, much like us, and I am by no means certain that he will permit us to remain."

In the presence of the sublime lake-scenery Shelley's poetical nature awoke. The grand voice of the mountains, which he will afterwards hear still more resonant at the foot of Mont Blanc, that great voice "able to abrogate the vast codes of error and fraud," awoke favourite dreams, visions of another golden age, in the poet's heart. He contemplated a poem designed to set forth as in a picture "the manners, simplicity, and delights of a perfect state of society." "Will you assist me?" he wrote to Miss Hitchener. "I only thought of it last night. I design to accomplish it and publish it. Then I shall draw

a picture of Heaven. I can do neither without some hints from you. The latter I think you ought to *make*." From that night the idea of "Queen Mab" and "Prometheus" existed in germ in Shelley's imagination. Meanwhile he busied himself in collecting his shorter lyrics, the offspring of his early Muse, intending to publish them with the following epigraph:

I sing, and Liberty may love the song,

for the use of those philosophical and reflecting minds "who love to trace the early state of human feelings and opinions." But he chiefly interested himself while at Keswick in the composition of a novel, "Hubert Cauvin," in which he described "the state of morals and opinions in France during the latter years of the Monarchy," and exhibited the causes of the failure of the French Revolution.* His conception of a novel had entirely changed since he wrote "Zastrozzi" and "St. Irvyne." He writes to Miss Hitchener on January 2nd, 1812: "I design to exclude the

* "You will see in my 'Hubert Cauvin,'" he writes in another letter, "that I have spoken of the policy of expediency, insincerity, mystery, as the immediate causes of violence and blood in the French Revolution."

sexual passion; and I think the keenest satire on its intemperance will be complete silence on the subject. I have already done about 200 pages of this work and about 150 of the essays."*

But neither poetry nor the charms of Nature could enable Shelley to forget his straitened means. It became more than ever important for him to see the Duke of Norfolk, and induce him to exert his influence as mediator with the poet's father. The Duke, who at Shelley's request had just made one useless attempt to soften Mr. Timothy Shelley, no sooner heard of the Percy Shelleys' arrival at Keswick than he hastened to invite them to Greystoke.

This visit exhausted the poet's last resources, and on November 30th he wrote to his cousin's father, the elder Medwin:

> We are now so poor as to be actually in danger of every day being deprived of the necessaries of life. . . . I would thank you to remit me a small sum for immediate expenses. . . . Mr. Westbrook has sent me a small sum, with an intimation that we are to expect no more; this

* Probably essays on moral and political subjects. No trace of "Hubert Cauvin" can now be found in print or manuscript.

suffices for the immediate discharge of a few debts; and it is nearly with our very last guinea that we visit the Duke of Norfolk at Greystoke to-morrow. We return to Keswick on Wednesday. I have very few hopes from this visit. That reception into Abraham's bosom [*i.e.*, a possible reconciliation with his father] appeared to me to be the consequence of some infamous concessions which are, I suppose, synonymous with duty.

The Duke showed much courteous goodwill towards the poet, whom he wished to attract to political life. Bysshe, Harriet, and Eliza spent a few pleasant days at Greystoke, from December 4th to the 8th or 9th. "Jew" Westbrook's daughters bore themselves well in the high and brilliant company to which they were introduced. Shelley, although of polished manners and accustomed to society, felt ill at ease and out of his element at the miniature court.

"Fatigued with aristocratical insipidity," he wrote to Miss Hitchener, "left alone scarce one moment by those senseless monopolisers of time that form the court of a duke who would be very well as a man, how delightful to commune with the soul that is undisguised, whose importance no arts are necessary nor adequate to exalt!"

The visit to Greystoke produced an immediate and excellent effect on Shelley's father and grandfather. Shelley had not long returned to Keswick,

when he heard through his uncle Pilfold of the good disposition felt towards him at Field Place. Mr. Timothy Shelley was willing to allow his son an annual income of £2000, if the latter would consent to entail the estate on his eldest son, or, in default of issue, on his brother. On hearing of this proposal, Shelley's wrath and indignation were extreme.

"Silly dotards!" he wrote to Miss Hitchener, "do they think I can be thus bribed and ground into an act of such contemptible injustice and inutility . . . that I will forswear my principles in consideration of £2,000 a year? . . . that I should entail £120,000 of command over labour, of power to remit this, to employ it for beneficent purposes on one whom I know not—who might, instead of being the benefactor of mankind, be its bane. . . . No! this you will not suspect me of."

Among the guests at Greystoke, one, in particular, had attracted Shelley, and soon became his friend.

"He was an elderly man," wrote Shelley, "who seemed to know all my concerns, and the expression of his face, whenever I held the arguments which I do everywhere, was such as I shall not readily forget. . . . . We have met him before in these mountains, and his particular look then struck Harriet."

This noticeable man was Mr. Calvert, a Liberal in politics, an interested amateur of scientific ex-

periment, and a friend of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Wordsworth describes him in the "Castle of Indolence" as

> A noticeable man, with large gray eyes.

It was at Mr. Calvert's house that Shelley first met Southey.

Shelley was even more attracted by men of letters and poets than by the Duke of Norfolk. But he was less successful in making their acquaintance on this occasion. The Lake poets, with the exception of Southey, eluded him. Wordsworth, who read none of the literature of the day, was unacquainted with him, and was destined to remain so for a considerable period. Coleridge* lamented subsequently that he had

* Hogg has transmitted to us the following interesting fragment of a letter from Coleridge on the subject of Shelley:

"I think as highly of Shelley's genius—yea, and of his *heart*—as you can do. Soon after he left Oxford he went to the Lakes, poor fellow! and with some wish, I have understood, to see me; but I was absent, and Southey received him instead. Now—the very reverse of what would have been the case in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred—I *might* have been of use to him, and Southey could not; for I should have sympathised with his poetics, metaphysical reviews—and the very word metaphysics is an abomination

missed the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the young philosopher, to whom he would have been of more use, he said, than was Southey. Another celebrated writer and critic (De Quincey, the opium-eater), was likewise destined to regret that, without the excuse of absence, he had failed to

to Southey; and Shelley would have felt that I understood him. His discussions—tending towards Atheism of a certain sort—would not have scared *me;* for *me* it would have been a semi-transparent larva, soon to be sloughed, and through which I should have seen the true *image*—the final metamorphosis. Besides, I have ever thought that sort of Atheism the next best religion to Christianity; nor does the better faith I have learnt from Paul and John interfere for the cordial reverence I feel for Benedict Spinoza. As far as Robert Southey was concerned with them, I am quite certain that his harshness arose entirely from the frightful reports that had been made to him respecting Shelley's moral character and conduct—reports essentially false—but, for a man of Southey's strict regularity and habitual self-government, rendered plausible by Shelley's own wild words and horror of hypocrisy."

When penning these words Coleridge had doubtless fresh in his memory the stanzas in which Shelley opens his heart to him, and traces for him the history of his thought, and the deceptions his soul suffered in his search for the ideal. (See "Lines to Coleridge," among the "Early Poems.") In connection with this subject, the portrait Shelley has drawn of the great Lake poet in "The Letter to Maria Gisborne" will be read with interest, as well as the lines referring to him in "Peter Bell the Third."

make the acquaintance of a brother-Oxonian and man of letters.

"Some neighbourly advantages I might certainly have placed at Shelley's disposal," he said many years afterwards in the curious article he wrote upon Shelley in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* (1846). "Grasmere, for instance, itself, which tempted at that time by a beauty which had not been sullied; Wordsworth, who then lived at Grasmere; Elleray and Professor Wilson, nine miles further; finally, my own library, which, being rich in the wickedest of German speculations, would have been more to Shelley's taste than the Spanish library of Southey. But all these temptations were negatived for Shelley by his sudden departure. Apparently he had the instinct within him of his own Wandering Jew for restlessness."

Southey was more curious and more cautious; he invited Shelley to visit him; and the two poets were soon on a footing of mutual regard, if not of positive friendship. Southey admired the talent of the young thinker, and believed him to be good and generous of heart. He saw in him the Southey of 1794. The writings of the future Laureate, those of Wordsworth and Coleridge and the "Gebir" of Landor, were favourite subjects of study with Shelley. Southey was endeared to him as a poet who had been ardent in the cause of the French Revolution, and severely handled by Canning in

the *Anti-Jacobin.* His "Wat Tyler" and his "Joan of Arc," in which he called kings the murderers of mankind, had placed him in the van of English Jacobinism. He had been a fervent admirer of Mary Wollstonecraft, and, together with Coleridge, one of the principal castigators of that republican propaganda which, having failed in England, was endeavouring to found a model Republic or Pantisocracy * in America.

On introducing himself to Southey, Shelley was mindful of the strong emotion he had experienced on reading the "Letters from Espriella," that pathetic picture of the sufferings of the poor, the misery of the working classes, and the barbarities of martial law.

But, however ready Shelley might be to admire, and Southey to be admired, friendship was difficult between two men whose genius and whose opinions differed so widely. Southey, at thirty-seven, was tinctured with the pride and arrogance of an aspirant to the laureateship. He was a pedagogue as well as a poet. Shelley found him narrow and limited, doling out his hospitality parsimoniously,

* See an allusion to this in his satire on literary apostates, "Peter Bell the Third."

listening to the younger man out of curiosity and by way of pastime, treating him as an inferior, almost as a child.

Southey possessed a fine library of rare books in every language, especially Spanish; his house was crowded with books even to the staircase. But they might not be touched without permission. Shelley saw little of them beyond their binding and titles. Occasionally Southey would take one down and read some passages to his guest, to whom they seemed mere puerilities. He was not partial to discussion, and stated his own opinion dogmatically. He resembled rather a living and speaking register of extracts than a man. He usually put an end to the controversy by a quotation which he regarded as decisive to a reasonable mind, and when Shelley gave vent to his ideas in enthusiastic and impetuous language, Southey would remark: "No doubt, no doubt; I thought and spoke just as you do when I was your age."

After some conversations of the kind, Shelley wrote to Godwin:

> Southey the poet, whose principles were pure and elevated once, is now the paid champion of every abuse and

absurdity. I have had much conversation with him. He says, "You will think as I do when you are as old." I do not feel the least disposition to be Mr. S.'s proselyte.

In a letter to Miss Hitchener, December 26th, 1811, Shelley recounts his principal grievances against Southey.

I have also been much engaged in talking with Southey. You may conjecture that a man must possess high and estimable qualities if, with the prejudices of such total differences from my sentiments, I can regard him great and worthy. In fact, Southey is an advocate of liberty and equality. He looks forward to a state when all shall be perfected, and matter become subjected to the omnipotence of mind. But he is now an advocate for existing establishments. . . . . Southey hates the Irish ; he speaks against Catholic emancipation and Parliamentary reform. In all these things we differ, and our differences were the subject of a long conversation. Southey calls himself a Christian ; but he does not believe that the evangelists were inspired ; he rejects the Trinity, and thinks that Jesus Christ stood precisely in the same relation to God as himself. Yet he calls himself a Christian. Now, if ever there was a definition of a Deist, I think it could never be clearer than this confession of faith. But Southey, though far from being a man of great reasoning powers, is a great man. He has all that characterises the poet ; great eloquence, though obstinacy in opinion, which arguments are the last things that can shake. He is a man of virtue.

While retaining a high esteem for Southey's talent, Shelley left Keswick with a poor idea

of his character, especially of the fixity of his opinions. As for Southey himself, he might not lay down his arms. The future author of "Queen Mab" and "Laon and Cythna" will be in his eyes a leader of what he will choose to call the "Satanic School," and, being no longer ignorant as he was when at Keswick, will be described as "a perverse will and a corrupt heart."

Some years later, Southey gave full bent to these impressions in a letter to Shelley which cannot be too severely condemned. Shelley had written to him for an explanation of the attacks on Keats in the "Quarterly." Southey, instead of excusing the writer of the article, breaks out into violent recrimination against Shelley himself, making use even of certain confidential communications concerning his first marriage that Shelley had made to him when at Keswick. "This letter," says Medwin, "opened all the old wounds, and hurt Shelley cruelly for some time." And Byron, in his "Conversations," thus stigmatises Southey's conduct:

> Shame on the man who could revive the memory of a misfortune of which Shelley was altogether innocent, and ground scandal upon falsehood! What! have the audacity

to confess that he had for ten years treasured up some observations of Shelley's made at his own table!

Disappointed in his hero-worship of Southey, Shelley turned with delight to her who, at that period, symbolised all that was wanting in the human beings around him. His dream was to conquer liberty and happiness for the whole world.

If two hearts, panting for the happiness and liberty of mankind, were joined by union and proximity, as they are by friendship and sympathy, what might we not expect? . . . . I anticipate the era of reform with the more eagerness, and picture to myself *you* the barrier between violence and renovation. . . . . I perceive in you the embryon of a mighty intellect which may one day enlighten thousands. . . . . Come, come! and share with us the noblest success or the most glorious martyrdom.

The chivalrous campaign that was intended as a prelude to the conquest of the world, and was to be crowned by triumph or martyrdom, was the regeneration of Ireland.

CHAPTER VIII.

SHELLEY AND GODWIN—SHELLEY IN IRELAND—IRISH PAMPHLETS—1812.

DURING Shelley's sojourn in the Lake country, he had entered into correspondence with a man whose name had long been illustrious in the political and literary world of England. This was William Godwin, who has been surnamed the English Rousseau.

Godwin was born in 1756, and was in his fifty-sixth year when he received Shelley's first letter. Shelley was yet in the cradle when, in 1793, at the age of thirty-seven, Godwin had written the work that was destined to establish his fame as a philosopher and Republican. "Political Justice" is a work as cold and passionless as its author, and for that very reason is well

adapted to attract serious and contemplative minds. Godwin describes in its pages a state of society from which, in opposition to actual social conditions, the oppression and injustice of the great, the foolishness and ignorance of the poor, would alike be banished "by means of a just and even distribution of the good things of life; a state of society in which every member would be independent, free from all conventionalities, without exclusive rights or privileges, and amenable only to the pure dictates of reason and nature." *

This great work effected in England that which Rousseau's "Contrat Social" had effected for France. All the youth of the day turned towards the new apostle of modern political philosophy. Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge acknowledged Godwin for their master. Shelley is to inherit their enthusiasm, and one day to write that "he only really thought and felt from the day that he read "'Political Justice.'"

* No one in France has more truly appreciated "Political Justice" than Benjamin Constant in his "Mélanges de Littérature et de Politique."

"Caleb Williams," a novel which appeared a year later, added to the fame and popularity of the young writer.

But the private life of Godwin, who was as timid and reserved in practice as he was bold in theory, offered a complete contrast to his doctrine.

As inimical to marriage as he was to every other social convention, and a celibate by nature, he yet was twice married. His first wife was the celebrated Mary Wollstonecraft, who became to Shelley the ideal of the woman-philosopher and woman-philanthropist for whom he sought among his female friends, and whom he afterwards portrayed in his poems. Between Mary and the author of "Laon and Cythna" there was more than one point of resemblance. For, like him, belonging to a wealthy family, she was deprived from early childhood, through the misconduct of her father, of the brilliant future that should have awaited her, and had learned in youth to bear her part in the hard struggles of life. She had early been made acquainted with the vices and follies of mankind, and she had ever received the homage due to her sex; she had worked for her

bread with her needle; she had also been a school-teacher in a London suburb, where she wrote her first work, "Thoughts on the Education of Girls;"* she had afterwards been governess in Lady Kingsborough's family, where she found time for a thorough study of French, and for writing stories and tales; finally she found more lucrative and more independent work in placing her pen and her talents at the service of Johnson, the publisher. This clever man appreciated her genius, and invited her every Sunday to his table. His house was at that time the meeting-place of all the boldest and most original thinkers of the day, politicians, artists, and men of letters, and Mary had the opportunity of meeting Thomas Paine, William Blake, who illustrated some of her books for children in his own visionary way, the brilliant artist, Henry Fuseli, and William Godwin. The invectives of the latter against marriage made her an open partisan of the theory of Free Love—a theory which she subsequently put in practice. She

* A book that has been unduly neglected. It is superior, in many respects, to the celebrated work of Fénélon on the same subject.

expounded her own ideas in her celebrated book, "Thoughts on the Education of Girls," dedicated to Talleyrand-Périgord.* In that extraordinary work, full of sensible and practical ideas, and of delicate and profound observation, in which the women of the present day might find much to learn, a young girl for the first time laid down principles which have become the recognised basis of all the just claims of her sex.

Many of her notions which then appeared premature and scandalous, have since been practically realised. She longed to obtain for women an equal degree of intellectual development with that of men, she claimed for them a similar education; that the same books should be placed in their hands, and that boys and girls should be brought up side by side in the same schools.

In 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft, having failed to win the platonic affections of the cold-hearted Fuseli, had sought consolation in a journey to France, there to study on the spot that marvellous

* Mary had read, with passionate interest, the Bishop of Autun's pamphlet on "L'Education Nationale," and believed in the writer's sincerity.

revolution whose dawn had fired her enthusiastic spirit. Probably she did not play the part attributed by Shelley to her, under the name of Cythna in "The Revolt of Islam," for in her quality of foreigner, she would be an object of suspicion; but she did her utmost, and in company with Thomas Paine, she had her hour of triumph in Paris. The "Rights of Women" had been translated into French, and received with acclamation by the Press. The book was sold on the Boulevards together with the "Droits de l'Homme." In Paris she carried her theories on love and marriage into practice, and falling passionately in love with an American adventurer named Imlay, she bore him a daughter who finds a place in the life of Shelley under the name of Fanny Godwin. Mary received a terrible blow by the desertion of Imlay; she endeavoured to drown herself in the Thames, but was rescued by some boatmen. It was then (1797) that Godwin's philosophical affections were won by the courage and ill-fortune of this interesting being; he offered a shelter, to use his own words, "to the wounded heart," and friendship melted into love. Southey, who met her at this

period, and esteemed her highly, describes her in the following words:

> Of all the lions or *literati* I have seen here, Mary Imlay's countenance is the best, infinitely the best. The only fault in it is an expression somewhat similar to what the prints of Horne Tooke display—an expression indicating superiority; not haughtiness nor sarcasm in Mary Imlay, but still it is unpleasant. Her eyes are light brown, and although the lid of one of them is affected by a little paralysis, *they* are the most meaning I ever saw.

Mary Godwin, the child of Mary Wollstonecraft and the author of "Political Justice," was born on August 30th, 1797. She was destined to become the wife of Shelley, and was herself a writer and poet, and a fit daughter of her whom she thus depicts:

> Mary Wollstonecraft was one of those beings who appear but once, perhaps, in a generation, shedding a light on humanity which neither conflicting opinions nor fortuitous circumstances can obscure.

Godwin, being left alone with two children, endeavoured to find a second mother for them. He addressed himself unsuccessfully, to a friend of Mary Wollstonecraft, the widow of a Mr. Reveley, whom we shall meet with again as Maria Gisborne, under which name she was lauded and

sung by Shelley. In December, 1801, Godwin was married to Mary Jane Clairmont, a widow with two children, Jane, better known as Claire, Byron's mistress, then about four or five years old, and Charles, older by one year.

Godwin's second wife was intelligent and cultured,* but being free from the romantic and philosophic turn of his first wife, she somewhat effaced from his remembrance Mary Wollstonecraft's theories on the education of girls. But Mrs. Clairmont's practical and narrow views failed to stifle in the youthful Mary those germs of free and independent thought which she had inherited from her mother.

The three little girls received the usual education from books published by their parents for the use of schools. In 1805, Godwin opened a Juvenile Library in Skinner Street. His star was beginning to pale; the needy bookseller of 1811 lived on a fame that might be called posthumous; before making his acquaintance, Shelley had supposed him to be dead.

It was from Southey that he learned the fact of Godwin's existence; and yet no long interval

* She translated several French story books for children.

had elapsed since Wordsworth, writing to a student of law, had said: "Throw away your books of chemistry, and read Godwin on 'Necessity'; he alone is immortal." But the fate of Spenser's fairy Duessa, who in one and the same day finds herself a young girl and a decrepit old woman, had befallen Godwin. His unparalleled celebrity astounded the next generation, and in 1827 his admirers were placed in an embarrassing dilemma: "Either we must have been mad then, when we allowed the high morality of Mr. Godwin to seduce us, or we must now be miserable apostates, torn by personal interest, from the sacred cause of truth." *

At the time of Shelley's acquaintance with him (he was then nearly sixty), he was an old-looking man, short, massive, thick, with a fine clear complexion, a very broad bald head; simply dressed in an old-fashioned black suit, he looked like a dissenting minister!

In society he was usually reserved, shy, and silent; yet did he always inspire a certain interest. Whatever he said when he chose to be communicative, was listened to with

* See an article on Godwin in *The British Review* for June, 1827.

attention, and was always worth hearing. He appeared to myself and to others to be a perpetual contradiction. He was at once pleasant and unpleasant, agreeable and disagreeable; his conversation was yielded so sparingly that it could never offend by excess, or seem intrusive; his speech was abrupt and curt, but every remark had its value, and was peculiar and characteristic. . . . . His articulation was indistinct; his utterance was not easy, but impeded by a sort of effort, or catch, sharp and dry.

The first occasion on which Shelley is mentioned in Godwin's Journal is under the date January 6th, 1812. "Wrote to Shelley." This was in reply to the letter of introduction of the young enthusiast.

KESWICK, *January 3rd*, 1812.

You will be surprised at hearing from a stranger. No introduction has, nor in any probability ever will, authorise that which common thinkers would call a liberty. It is, however, a liberty which, although not sanctioned by custom, is so far from being reprobated by reason, that the dearest interests of mankind imperiously demand that a certain etiquette of fashion should no longer keep "man at a distance from man," or impose its flimsy fancies between the free communications of intellect.

The name of Godwin has been used to excite in me feelings of reverence and admiration. I have been accustomed to consider him a luminary too dazzling for the darkness which surrounds him. From the earliest period of my knowledge of his principles, I have ardently desired to share on the footing of intimacy that intellect which I have delighted to contemplate in its emanations. Considering, then, these feelings, you will not be surprised at the incon-

ceivable emotions with which I learnt your existence and your dwelling. I had enrolled your name in the list of the honourable dead. I had felt regret that the glory of your being had passed from this earth of ours. It is not so. You still live, and I firmly believe are still planning the welfare of human kind. I have but just entered on the scene of human operations, yet my feelings and my reasonings correspond with what yours were. My course has been short but eventful. I have seen much of human prejudice, suffered much from human persecution, yet I see no reason, hence inferable, which should alter my wishes for their renovation. The ill-treatment I have met with has more than ever impressed the truth of my principles on my judgment. I am young. I am ardent in the cause of philanthropy and truth. Do not suppose that this is vanity. I am not conscious that it influences this portraiture. I imagine myself dispassionately describing the state of my mind. I am young; you have gone before me, I doubt not are a veteran to me in the years of persecution. Is it strange that, defying prejudice as I have done, I should outstep the limits of custom's prescription, and endeavour to make my desire useful by a friendship with William Godwin? I pray you to answer this letter. Imperfect as may be my capacity, my desire is ardent and unintermitted. Half-an-hour would be at least humanely employed in the experiment. I may mistake your residence. Certain feelings, of which I may be an inadequate arbiter, may induce you to desire concealment. I may not, in fine, have an answer to this letter. If I do not, when I come to London I shall seek for you. I am convinced I could represent myself to you in such terms as not to be thought wholly unworthy of your friendship. At least, if desire for universal happiness has any claim upon your preference, that desire I can exhibit. Adieu. I shall earnestly await your answer.

P. B. SHELLEY.

Godwin's reply to this letter has been lost. But a continuous correspondence was begun between himself and Shelley, in the course of which the elderly philosopher, who, like others, had outlived his youthful enthusiasm, applied himself to moderate the impetuosity and impatience of his young disciple, and to restrain his irrepressible longing to reform mankind. Shelley submitted with docility to the wisdom of the author of "Political Justice;" he promises to try to acquire that soberness of spirit, that calmness of thought which, he says, "is the characteristic of true heroism." He quotes—

> Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
> And waste its sweetness on the desert air—

and hopes he will not outstep the boundaries of the "modesty of nature." "He will not again crudely obtrude the question of Atheism on the world," yet he is desirous not to sacrifice all things to the feigned humility that has paralysed so much of the power of mankind; he cannot resign himself to quit the arena he entered so boldly, to renounce the apostolate of the true and good:

> But could I not at the same time improve my own powers and diffuse true and virtuous principles? Many,

with equally confined talents to my own, are by publications scattering the seeds of prejudice and selfishness. Might not an exhibition of truth, with equal elegance and depth, suffice to counteract the deleterious tendency of their principles?

The trial of strength upon which he is eager to enter, and of which he speaks with extreme reserve to Godwin, fearing he may be stopped by objections from the philosopher, is the same on which he dilates with great openness in his letters to Miss Hitchener: the emancipation of Ireland.

Shelley seems to have felt at an early period, a chivalrous love for that unhappy country. In his novel of "St. Irvyne" he personified his moral ideal in an Irish gentleman, who, to charm his mistress, sings to her the patriotic songs of his native land. And in 1811 he wrote a poem* in aid of Peter

* "A Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things. By a Gentleman of the University of Oxford." The epigraph was borrowed from Shelley's favourite poem, "The Curse of Kehama," by Southey:

"And Famine at her bidding wasted wide
The wretched land, till, in the public way,
Promiscuous where the dead and dying lay,
Dogs fed on human bones in the open light of day."

Strange to say, this poem, which was formally announced in the London and Oxford newspapers, and which brought, it is said, £100 to poor Finnerty, is not to be found. Mr. Dowden

Finnerty, a brave Irish patriot, who was then enduring an imprisonment of eighteen months for having written an article in the *Morning Chronicle* on the cruelties practised in Ireland under the Government of Lord Castlereagh.

His conversations with Southey on Irish questions had still further inflamed his desire to devote himself to the cause of Ireland's emancipation, and the last days of his stay at Keswick were spent in preparation for the accomplishment of his design.

Before leaving Cumberland he wrote to Godwin, January 28th, 1812:

> I have been preparing an Address to the Catholics of Ireland, which, however deficient may be its execution, I can by no means admit that it contains one sentiment which *can* harm the cause of liberty and happiness. It consists of the benevolent and tolerant deductions of philosophy reduced into the simplest language, and such as those who by their uneducated poverty are most susceptible of evil impressions from Catholicism, may clearly comprehend. I know it can do no harm; it cannot excite rebellion, as its main principle is to trust the success of a cause to the energy of its truth.

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ingeniously conjectures that the lost poem may probably be discovered in substance in those portions of "Queen Mab" which eloquently depict the disorders and miseries of Shelley's time.

It cannot "widen the breach between the kingdoms," as it attempts to convey to the vulgar mind sentiments of universal philanthropy; and whatever impressions it may produce, they can be no others but those of peace and harmony; it owns no religion but benevolence, no cause but virtue, no party but the world. I shall devote myself with unremitting zeal, as far as an uncertain state of health will permit, towards forwarding the great ends of virtue and happiness in Ireland, regarding, as I do, the present state of that country's affairs as an opportunity which if I, being thus disengaged, permit to pass unoccupied, I am unworthy of the character which I have assumed.

The Address was to be printed in Dublin with his poems, and was to be affixed to the walls of the city.

When on the point of embarking at Whitehaven prior to commencing the crusade, and all aglow with enthusiastic hope, he writes to Miss Hitchener:

We are now at Whitehaven—a miserable, manufacturing sea-port town. I write to you a short letter to inform you of our safety, and that the wind which will fill the sails of our packet to-night is favourable and fresh. Certainly it is laden with some of your benedictions, as with the breath of the disembodied virtues who smile upon our attempt. We set off to-night at twelve o'clock, and arrive at the Isle of Man, whence you will hear from us to-morrow; then we proceed, when the wind serves, to Dublin. We may be detained some days in the island; if the weather is fine we shall not regret it; at all events we shall escape this filthy town and horrible inn. . . . We felt

regret at leaving Keswick. I passed Southey's house without *one* sting. He is a man who *may* be amiable in his private character, stained and false as is his public one. He may be amiable, but if he is, my feelings are liars, and I have been so long accustomed to trust to them in these cases, that the opinion of the world is not the likeliest corrector to impeach their credibility. But we left the Calverts with regret. I hope some day to show you *Mrs.* Calvert; I shall not forget her, but will preserve her memory as another flower to compose a garland which I intend to present to *you*.

Shelley, accompanied by Harriet and Eliza, sailed from Whitehaven on February 3rd, remained for a few days in the Isle of Man, and after twenty-eight hours of rough sea, reached Dublin in the night of February 12th, 1812.

Immediately on landing he wrote to Miss Hitchener:

. . . . At length, however, you are free from anxiety for our safety, as *here* we have nothing to apprehend but Government, which will not, assure yourself, *dare* to be so barefacedly oppressive as to attack my *Address;* it will breathe the spirit of peace, toleration, and patience; . . . as my name, which will be prefixed to the *Address*, will show that my deeds are not deeds of darkness, nor my counsels things of mystery and fear. . . . Dread nothing for me; the course of my conduct in Ireland (as shall the entire course of my life) shall be marked by openness and sincerity. . . . The ocean rolls between us. O thou ocean whose multitudinous billows ever wash Erin's green isle, on

whose shores this venturous arm would plant the flag of liberty, roll on!

TO IRELAND.

Bear witness, Erin! when thine injured isle
Sees summer on its verdant pastures smile,
Its cornfields waving in the winds that sweep
The billowy surface of thy circling deep.
Thou tree whose shadow o'er the Atlantic gave
Peace, wealth, and beauty, to its friendly wave,
. . . . its blossoms fade,
And blighted are the leaves that cast its shade;
Whilst the cold hand gathers its scanty fruit,
Whose chillness struck a canker to its root.

On arriving in Dublin, one of Shelley's first steps was to call at Curran's house in order to present to the great lawyer and patriot a letter of introduction given him by Godwin. Shelley had been deeply interested by his speeches even before he purposed to visit Ireland; he knew Curran to have been bravely devoted to the cause of the victims of the Rebellion. Curran, however, was not very eager to make his acquaintance. Shelley called twice at his house without finding him. His political pamphlets were not of a nature to impress Curran favourably. The former friend of Robert Emmet, the eloquent advocate of Rowan and Wolfe Tone, the author of the celebrated

speech on the state of Ireland, delivered in the Dublin House of Parliament in 1794, had become more moderate in his views since he had accepted the office of Master of the Rolls, which enforced a certain reserve and a prudent circumspection with regard to revolutionary agitators.

Shelley was eager to begin the campaign, and lost no time in putting his "Address to the Irish People" in the hands of the printers.*

Twelve days after his arrival, the "Address to the Irish People, by P. B. Shelley, price 5*d.*," was published in an edition of fifteen hundred copies.

It had been rapidly written in a popular style, and was somewhat immature, but it contained passages sparkling with enthusiasm and patriotism,

* Hogg, who never forgets to mention his enemy Eliza, tells us that while the Address was in the press, the Guardian Angel did her best for the regeneration of Ireland by collecting "useful passages" for publication from the works of Tom Paine. As for Harriet, she was a warm convert to the cause of Ireland. "I am Irish," she had written to Miss Hitchener when about to quit Keswick, ". . . I have done with the English. I have witnessed too much of John Bull, and I am ashamed of him. . . . I will claim kindred with those brave sons of the ocean, and when I am deceived in them it will be enough."

and breathed throughout such sincere and warm feelings of humanity and fraternity, as could not fail to reach the heart of the people. While putting forward the claims on which all the Revolutionary Committees were agreed, viz., Catholic Emancipation and the Repeal of the Union, Shelley went far beyond these.

He pleaded the cause of all the great thoughts that had hitherto found a home in his soul, and which now rushed burning from his pen in words that were clear, simple, spirited, and highly coloured, but that were always noble, and frequently poetical. It was difficult to remain unmoved by the earnestness and sincerity with which the young enthusiast preached liberty of conscience, political tolerance, religious equality in the eyes of the law, horror of persecution and of fanaticism, and universal love and charity, "that great principle of the gospel of Christ." Wheresoever human nature was allowed its natural sway, those human accents of Shelley must have found an echo.

The more thought there is in the world, the more happiness and liberty will there be. . . . Oh, Irishmen! I am interested in your cause; and it is not because you are

Irishmen or Roman Catholics that I feel with you and feel for you, but because you are men and sufferers. Were Ireland at this time peopled with Brahmins, this very same Address would have been suggested by the same state of mind.

It must be admitted, however, that to the Catholics of Ireland this was precisely the weak point in his reasoning. Freedom of thought, in which he believed all strength consisted, was just what told against his philanthropic crusade. The history of the ancient Catholic religion as traced by him after the manner of Voltaire and the Encyclopædists, could scarcely be to the taste of Irish Catholics; they could hardly respond with enthusiasm to the invitation of the young tribune to be on their guard against falling under the yoke of the priests, "those mild-faced and beardless impostors," who speak of liberty, and only wish for slaves. He little understood Catholics, who tried to convert them to a worship "without priests, altars, confessionals, processions, or miracles," to that interior worship taught by Socrates, "the only worship that should be dear to a good man, the worship of pure heart-felt affection, the piety that is displayed by good actions." Yet every Irishman must have felt

proud, and at the same time enthusiastically hopeful, when Shelley poured forth these pathetic words:

> Oh! Ireland, thou emerald of the ocean, whose sons are generous and brave, whose daughters are honourable, and frank, and fair; thou art the isle on whose green shores I have desired to see the standard of liberty erected, a flag of fire, a beacon at which the world shall light the torch of Freedom! . . . Adieu, my friends! May every sun that shines on your green island see the annihilation of an abuse, and the birth of an embryon of melioration! Your own hearts—may they become the shrines of purity and freedom, and never may smoke to the Mammon of unrighteousness ascend from the unpolluted altar of their devotion!

As for the means of attaining Catholic Emancipation and Repeal of the Union, Shelley was the declared enemy of violent or cowardly measures. He quoted as an example the French Revolution, which had been a terrible failure for the people, because it had made use of violence and falsehood.

> "My warm-hearted friends," he exclaims with blunt freedom, "who meet together to talk of the distresses of your countrymen, until social chat induces you to drink rather freely; as ye have felt passionately, so reason coolly. Nothing hasty can be lasting; lay up the money with which you usually purchase drunkenness and ill-health, to relieve the pains of your fellow-sufferers. Let your children lisp of

Freedom in the cradle—let your death-bed be the school for fresh exertions—let every street of the city, and field of the country, be connected with thoughts which liberty has made holy. Be warm in your cause, yet rational, and charitable, and tolerant—never let the oppressor grind you into justifying his conduct by imitating his meanness.

He would fain inspire the Irish with his own hopefulness, based on the friendly dispositions of the Prince of Wales, afterwards George IV.:

That great and good man, Charles Fox, who was your friend, and the friend of Freedom, was the friend of the Prince of Wales. The Prince was the better for his instructive conversation. He saw the truth, and he believed it. But will he redress your wrongs?

Shelley can feel no certainty of this, and his prophetic soul casts a glance on the future of that weak and unworthy Prince:

I know not what to say; his staff is gone and he leans upon a broken reed; his present advisers are not like Charles Fox, they do not plan for liberty and safety, not for the happiness, but for the glory of their country; and what, Irishmen, is the glory of a country divided from their happiness? It is a false light hung out by the enemies of Freedom to lure the unthinking into their net. Men like these surround the Prince, and whether or no he has really promised to emancipate you, whether or no he will consider the promise of a Prince of Wales binding to a King of England, is yet a matter of doubt. We cannot at least be quite certain of it; on this you cannot certainly rely. . . . Mildness, sobriety, and reason are the effectual methods of

forwarding the ends of liberty and happiness. . . O Irishmen, REFORM YOURSELVES! Your reform must begin at your own firesides.

The reform of Ireland was in Shelley's eyes but the first step towards the thorough emancipation of the human race, and the realisation of the Millennium of "Political Justice"—that universal reign of reason and love. We now, for the first time, find the poet's favourite theme of a social Palingenesis by the final triumph of virtue developed at some length; he was soon to give it poetical form in "Queen Mab," and at last to invest it with supreme beauty in "Prometheus Unbound."

The Address concluded with these words of Lafayette, whose name is "endeared, by its peerless bearer, to every lover of the human race":

For a nation to love liberty it is sufficient that she knows it, to be free it is sufficient that she wills it.

Shelley forwarded copies of his pamphlet to all his friends, including the great William Godwin, and he was anxious to justify himself in the eyes of his austere and timorous Mentor for the youthful eagerness with which he had

published his thoughts. He writes to him under the date of February 24th :

I hope that the motives which induce me to publish thus early in life do not arise from any desire of distinguishing myself any more than is consistent with and subordinate to usefulness. . . . I therefore write and I publish, because I will publish nothing that shall not conduce to virtue, and therefore my publications, so far as they do influence, shall influence to good. My views of society and my hopes of it, meet with congenial ones in few breasts. But virtue and truth are congenial to many. I will employ no means but these for my object, and however visionary some may regard the ultimatum that I propose, if they act virtuously they will, equally with myself, forward its accomplishment ; and my publications will present to the moralist and the metaphysician a picture of a mind, however juvenile and unformed, which had at the dawn of its knowledge taken a singular turn ; and to leave out the early lineaments of its appearance would be to efface those which the attrition of the world had not deprived of right-angled originality.

In order to gain some idea of Shelley's activity during his demagogic and humanitarian fever, it is necessary to read his letters to Miss Hitchener. In these there is none of the sobriety with which he addresses Godwin ; he allows full play to the illusions of his revolutionary zeal :

Lower Sackville Street, February 27th, 1812.

I have already sent four hundred of my little pamphlets into the world, and they have excited a sensation of wonder

in Dublin; eleven hundred yet remain for distribution. Copies have been sent to sixty public houses. No prosecution is yet attempted; I do not see how it can be. Congratulate me, my friend, for everything proceeds well. I could not expect more rapid success. The persons with whom I have got acquainted approve of my principles. . . . I do not doubt your ardent desire to "share with me the high delight of awaking a noble nation from the lethargy of its bondage." . . .

Expectation is on the tiptoe. I send a man out every day to distribute copies, with instructions how and where to give them. . . . I stand at the balcony of our window and watch till I see a man *who looks likely;* I throw a book to him. On Monday my next book makes its appearance. This is addressed to a different class, recommending and proposing associations. I have in my mind a plan for proselytising the young men at Dublin College. Those who are not entirely given up to the grossness of dissipation are perhaps reclaimable. . . . Whilst you are with us in Wales, I shall attempt to organise [a philanthropic association] there which will co-operate with the Dublin one. Might I not extend them all over England, and *quietly* revolutionise the country? . . .

My youth is much against me here. Strange that truth should not be judged by its inherent excellence, independent of any reference to the utterer. . . . I have not yet seen Curran. . . . I do not like him for accepting the office of "Master" [of the Rolls]. O'Connor, brother to the rebel Arthur, is here. [I have] written to him. . . . I am resolved. Good principles are scarce here. The public papers are either Oppositionists or Ministerial. One is as contemptible and narrow as the other. I wish I could change this. I am of course hated by both of those parties. The remnant of united Irishmen whose wrongs make them hate England, I have more hope of. I have met

with no determined Republicans, but have found some who are democrat*ifiable.*

Shelley had forwarded a copy of his pamphlet to Godwin, and great must have been the shock to his ardent proselytising zeal when he received the philosopher's reply. Never did a more glacial stream fall on more burning, fevered pulses. We can picture to ourselves the disappointment of the fervent apostle who believed himself about to revolutionise England, on reading the following lines, full as they are of common sense and prudent reserve:

March 4th, 1812.

In your last letter you say: "I publish, because I will publish nothing that shall not conduce to virtue; and therefore my publications, so far as they do influence, shall influence to good."

Oh, my friend, how short-sighted are the views which dictated this sentence! Every man in every deliberate action of his life imagines he sees a preponderance of good likely to result. This is the law of our nature from which none of us can escape. You do not on this point generically differ from the human beings about you. Mr. Burke and Tom Paine, when they wrote on the French Revolution, perhaps equally believed that the sentiments they supported were essentially conducive to the welfare of man. . . . .

In the pamphlet you have just sent me, your views and mine, as to the improvement of mankind, are decisively at

issue. You profess the immediate object of your efforts to be "the organisation of a society, whose institution shall serve as a bond to its members." If I may be allowed to understand my book on "Political Justice," its pervading principle is, that association is a most ill-chosen and ill-qualified mode of endeavouring to promote the political happiness of mankind. And I think of your pamphlet, however commendable and lovely are many of the sentiments it contains, that it will be either ineffective to its immediate object, or that it has no very remote tendency to light again the flames of rebellion and war. . . .

Discussion, reading, inquiry, perpetual communication, these are my favourite methods for the improvement of mankind; but associations, organised societies, I firmly condemn.

> You may as well tell the adder not to sting;
> You may as well use question with the wolf;
> You may as well forbid the mountain pines
> To wag their high tops, and to make no noise
> When they are fretted with the gusts of Heaven,

as tell organised societies of men, associated to obtain their rights and to extinguish oppression, prompted by a deep aversion to inequality, luxury, enormous taxes, and the evils of war, to be innocent, to employ no violence, and calmly to await the progress of truth. I never was at a public political dinner, a scene that I have not now witnessed for many years, that I did not see how the enthusiasm was lighted up, how the flame caught from man to man, how fast the dictates of sober reason were obliterated by the gusts of passion, and how near the assembly was, like Alexander's compotators at Persepolis, to go forth and fire the city; or like the auditors of Anthony's oration over the body of Cæsar, to apply a flaming brand to the mansion of each several conspirator. . . .

One principle that I believe is wanting in you, and all our too fervent and impetuous reformers, is the thought that almost every institution or form of society is good in its place, and in the period of time to which it belongs. How many beautiful and admirable effects grew out of Popery and the monastic institutions in the period when they were in their genuine health and vigour! To them we owe almost all our logic and our literature. What excellent effects do we reap, even at this day, from the feudal system and from chivalry! In this point of view, nothing can perhaps be more worthy of our applause than the English Constitution.

The last remark must have been peculiarly distasteful to Shelley, who in his second pamphlet, "Proposals for an Association of Philanthropists," had expounded somewhat crudely his theories on politics, and launched into violent abuse of the English Constitution. Starting from the principle that there can be no lawful Constitution except that made by the people for their own benefit, he proceeded to show that neither the Great Charter nor the Bill of Rights, the origin of which is held up to us as equally sacred, mysterious, and awful as the law of nature, had any right to the title of Constitution.

The speeches of kings . . . the writings of courtiers, and the journals of Parliament, which teem with its glory, are full of political cant, exhibit the skeleton of national freedom, and are fruitless attempts to hide evils in whose

favour they cannot prove an alibi. . . . The songs of "Rule Britannia" and "God Save the King" are but abstracts of the caterpillar creed of courtiers, cut down to the taste and comprehension of a mob; the one to disguise to an alehouse politician the evils of that devilish practice of war, and the other to inspire among clubs of all descriptions a certain feeling which some call loyalty and others servility.

The morning of Friday, February 28th, 1812, was a morning of excitement for the Sackville Street trio. On that day a meeting of the friends of Catholic Emancipation, under the presidency of Lord Fingall, was held in Fishamble Street Theatre, and Shelley was to make a speech. Women were present at such meetings; indeed, they formed a chief attraction. The English police had sent over detective officers to report the proceedings.* We do not possess the exact words of Shelley's speech, which unluckily was immediately preceded by a masterly discourse from O'Connell, but he tells us that he spoke for more than an hour,† and we can form a good

* Of the two reports in existence, one does not mention Shelley, the other, giving a list of the speakers, names a certain Shelley, "who gives himself out as a born Englishman."

† Mr. Jeaffreson considers that Shelley's speech lasted not longer than ten minutes. What an admirable judge of time is Mr. Jeaffreson!

idea of it from extracts given by the Dublin newspapers, and in particular by the account in the *Evening Post* of February 29th:

Mr. Shelley asked for a hearing. He was an Englishman, and when he reflected on the crimes committed by his nation on Ireland he could not but blush for his countrymen, did he not know that arbitrary power never failed to corrupt the heart of man. (Loud and prolonged cheering.) He had come to Ireland for the sole purpose of interesting himself in the fortunes of the country, and impressed with a full conviction of the necessity of Catholic Emancipation, and of the baneful effects which the union with Great Britain had entailed upon Ireland. He had walked through the fields of the country and the streets of the city . . . and had seen that edifice which ought to have been the fane of their liberties converted into a temple of Mammon.* (Thunders of applause.) He beheld beggary and famine in the country, and he could lay his hand on his heart and say that the cause of such sights was the union with Great Britain. (Hear, hear!) He was resolved to do his utmost to promote a repeal of the Union. Catholic Emancipation would do a great deal towards the amelioration of the condition of the people, but he was convinced that the repeal of the Union was of more importance. He considered that the victims whose members were vibrating on gibbets were driven to the commission of the crimes which they expiated by their lives, by the effects of the Union. . . .

He could not imagine that the religious opinions of a

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* The Houses of Parliament converted into the Bank of Ireland.

man should exclude him from the rights of society. The original founder of their religion taught no such doctrine. Equality in this respect was general in the American States, and why not here? Did a change of place change the nature of man? He would beg those in power to recollect the French Revolution; the suddenness, the violence with which it burst forth, and the causes which gave rise to it. He ended by expressing a hope that many years would not pass over his head before he had made himself conspicuous at least by his zeal on behalf of Emancipation and Repeal.

We learn from Shelley himself, that when he spoke of his doctrine of religious free-thought, his words were received with disapprobation and hisses. He must have been very ignorant of Irish politics, or very anxious to expound his dearest principles, to venture on asking a meeting of Irishmen for equal rights for the Protestant minority and the Catholic majority. He would not have committed such an error a few years later. He had learned from reflection, that the art of persuasion is not the same as the art of reasoning, and that concessions must be made, artifice used, and even a certain amount of legitimate cunning employed when we would rule by eloquence. He appeals to the conduct of Christ himself, who, when preaching the abrogation of the Old Law, said to the Jews: "Think not I

am come to destroy the Law and the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."*

Shelley's discourse, however, must have made a powerful impression on his audience, coming as it did from the lips of a youth (who at that time looked about fifteen), and uttered with the same warmth and conviction that inspire the Irish pamphlets of which the speech was only an abridgment. In the *Weekly Messenger* of March 7th, there appeared a long article in honour of the youthful tribune, of "the bold and fearless advocate of good-will, the missionary of truth," who had courageously put his finger on the political wounds of Ireland, and had proclaimed the true principles of Christianity.

The writer of the article was Mr. Lawless, an ardent partisan of Emancipation, known in Dublin as "honest Jack Lawless," and at that time engaged on a history of Ireland. His character, his Republican proclivities, his project of a history, made him interesting to Shelley,

* There is a remarkable passage in the Essay on Christianity, wherein Shelley criticises admirably his own juvenile rhetoric when he spoke in Dublin. More than one point of likeness may be found in Shelley's "Essay," and the "Vie de Jésus" by M. Renan.

who, believing that such a work would be an efficacious means of instructing the Irish public on the righteousness of their claims, determined to contribute to that end with his purse, if not his pen, and asked Mr. Medwin to raise two hundred and fifty pounds for the purpose of furthering the undertaking.*

Shelley soon discovered that in order to please Irish Catholics, it was necessary to share their prejudices, their dislikes, and their intolerance; that his great philosophical principles were mistrusted by the leaders, and that the Irish people were in no mood to undertake a chivalrous crusade for the benefit of humanity in general.†

Yet although the Irish people, as he began to know them better, appeared to him more distressed and less deserving of pity, his heart

* The result of the joint effort was the appearance, in 1814, of "A Compendium of the History of Ireland down to the Reign of George I." According to Mr. Rossetti, some passages in the work are from Shelley's pen, but Mr. Dowden is of opinion that the portion really written by Shelley was never printed.

† "I do not like Lord Fingall," wrote Shelley, "or *any* of the Catholic aristocracy. Their intolerance can be equalled by nothing but the hardy wickedness and falsehood of the Prince. My speech was misinterpreted. . . ."

bled at the idea of deserting them in their misery and of renouncing all efforts to better their condition.

"Can they be in a worse state than at present?" he wrote to Godwin, endeavouring to refute the arguments of the latter against association. "Intemperance and hard labour have reduced them to machines. The oyster that is washed and driven at the mercy of the tides, appears to me an animal of almost equal elevation in the scale of intellectual being. Is it impossible to awaken a moral sense in the breasts of those who appear so unfitted for the high destination of their nature? . . . I had no conception of the depth of human misery until now. The poor of Dublin are assuredly the meanest and most miserable of all. In their narrow streets thousands seem huddled together—one mass of animated filth. With what eagerness do such scenes as these inspire me! How self-confident, too, do I feel in my assumption to teach the lessons of virtue to those who grind their fellow beings into worse than annihilation. These were the persons, to whom in my fancy I had addressed myself; how quickly were my views on this subject changed; yet how deeply has this very change rooted the conviction on which I came hither!"

The celebrity conferred on Shelley by the publication of his pamphlets served to attract distressed persons of all kinds to him, and to bring him into contact with the deepest depths of poverty in Dublin.

"I cannot recount," he writes to Miss Hitchener, March 10th, "all the horrible instances of unrestricted and licensed

tyranny that have met my ears, scarcely those which have personally occurred to me. . . . I am sick of this city, and long to be with you and peace. The rich grind the poor into abjectness, and then complain that they are abject. They goad them to famine, and hang them if they steal a loaf."

We may compare with the foregoing lines the gloomy picture of contemporary Ireland that has been traced for us by Mr. George Moore—a writer who is now at the head of the realistic school of novelists in England—in his lifelike study: "Terre d'Irlande."*

The words of wisdom, and the paternal warnings of Godwin, who wrote: "Shelley, you are preparing a scene of blood!"† helped to turn him from the enthusiastic enterprise to which he had devoted all his heartfelt and burning eloquence.

"It is indescribably painful," he writes to Godwin on March 18th, "to contemplate beings capable of soaring to the heights of science with Newton and Locke, without attempting to awaken them from a state of lethargy so

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* One vol., Charpentier, 1887.

† "Say not with Macbeth:

I am in blood
Stept in so far, that, should I wade no more,
Returning were as tedious as go o'er."

opposite. . . . But I submit—I shall address myself no more to the illiterate. I will look to events in which it will be impossible that I can share, and make myself the cause of an effect which will take place ages after I have mouldered in the dust.; I need not observe that this resolve requires stoicism. To return to the heartless bustle of ordinary life, to take interest in its uninteresting details, I cannot. Wholly to abstract our views from self, undoubtedly requires unparalleled disinterestedness. There is not a completer abstraction than labouring for distant ages."

On March 30th, 1812, when Shelley wrote those lines, and shaking the dust from his feet, prepared to quit that other Jerusalem unworthy of his labours and his love, he learned that in this world, as Baudelaire expresses it, "l'action n'est pas la sœur du rêve," and received the revelation of his real genius.

The true poet was born. Godwin, delighted to see in him no longer "a Robert Emmet,*

* Shelley wrote, probably in Dublin, a poem entitled "The Tomb of Robert Emmet." Mr. Dowden gives us the two last verses :

No trump tells thy virtues—the grave where they rest
With thy dust shall remain unpolluted by fame,
Till thy foes, by the world and by fortune carest,
Shall pass like a mist from the light of thy name.

When the storm-cloud that lowers o'er the daybeam is gone,
Unchanged, unextinguished, its lifespring will shine ;
When Erin has ceased with their memory to groan,
She will smile through the tears of revival on thine.

an ephemeral meteor," but instead, a worker patiently watching the incessant though imperceptible progress of mankind, could now chant his "Nunc dimittis" and write to him in these words:

> The thing most to be desired, I believe, is to keep up the intellectual, and in some sense the solitary fermentation, and to procrastinate the contact and consequent action. This thing has its time: "In the hour that ye think not, the Son of Man cometh."

CHAPTER IX.

SHELLEY IN WALES—AT NANTGWILT—IN NORTH DEVON—IN LONDON—AT TANYRALT—AT LYNTON—LETTERS TO GODWIN—"QUEEN MAB"—1812–1813.

A SHORT time previous to his departure from Dublin, Shelley had succeeded in becoming acquainted with the incorruptible Curran, and was invited to dinner at his house. The poet discovered, to his great mortification, that a celebrated patriot, when he has reached a certain age, can care for good living as much as for his country, and can unite devotion to liberty with a decided taste for license in speech. To such an one as Shelley, the brilliant talents of his host (whom Byron described as an "imagination machine, just as Piron was an epigram machine,")

could not compensate for these faults. He wrote of him to Godwin in the following terms:

> Curran is certainly a man of great abilities, but it appears to me that he undervalues his powers when he applies them to what is usually the subject of his conversation. I may not possess sufficient taste to relish humour, or his incessant comicality may weary that which I possess. He does not possess that mould of mind which I have been accustomed to contemplate with the highest feelings of respect and love. In short, though Curran indubitably possesses a strong understanding and a brilliant fancy, I should not have beheld him with the feelings of admiration which his first visit excited, had he not been your intimate friend.

Shelley left Ireland on April 4th, 1812. Before his departure, he despatched a box containing the remaining copies of his different pamphlets printed in Ireland, to his dear friend Miss Hitchener. This box was delayed at the Holyhead custom-house, and opened by a clerk who, on examining the contents, communicated with the Home Secretary, and some correspondence* ensued concerning it.

Among the papers it contained, we are already

* In one of the papers belonging to the correspondence and kept at the Record Office, Shelley is mentioned as a dangerous and most extraordinary man.

acquainted with the "Address" and "Proposals for an Association;" the "Declaration of Rights," the most revolutionary in tone of those seized by the police, was a mere copy of the French Declaration in 1789, and of that of Robespierre; the Code of the Republican policy is set forth in it in thirty-one articles, expressed with terseness, and sometimes with epigrammatic force.* The first article is headed: "Government has no Rights," and he echoes Rousseau in saying: "What the rich give to the poor, whilst millions are starving, is not a perfect favour, but an imperfect right."

Poetry, too, played a part in this arsenal of revolutionary weapons, in the shape of a ballad on "The Devil's Walk," a subject which had already been handled by Southey and Coleridge in common.

On April 14th the travellers arrived, after a week of wandering, in the neighbourhood of Cwm Elan, where Shelley had passed some melancholy weeks the preceding year. There was an old house near by, situated on the

* There is an excellent article on this subject by Mr. Rossetti in the *Fortnightly Review*, January 7th, 1871.

picturesque stream, from which it took its name of Nantgwilt, which offered a comfortable resting-place, and the charm of beautiful scenery, too, to the romantic.

"The cheapness, beauty, and retirement," writes Shelley to Godwin, "make this place in every point of view desirable. Nor can I view this scenery—mountains and rocks seeming to form a barrier round this quiet valley, which the tumult of the world may never overleap—without associating *your* presence with the idea, that of your wife, your children, and one other friend to complete the picture which my mind has drawn to itself of felicity. Come to Wales. . . ."

We are now* embosomed in the solitude of mountains, woods, and rivers, silent, solitary, and old; far from any town, six miles from Rhayader, which is nearest. A ghost haunts the house, which has frequently been seen by the servants. We have several witches in our neighbourhood, and are quite stocked with fairies and hobgoblins of every description.

Ghosts of another kind haunted Shelley's imagination—melancholy recollections of his former visit to scenes, which now, owing to the brighter circumstances surrounding him, wore so different an aspect.

Nantgwilt . . . is in the neighbourhood of scenes marked deeply on my mind by the thoughts which possessed it

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* Letter to Miss Hitchener, April 18th, 1812.

when present among them. The ghosts of these old friends have a dim and strange appearance, when resuscitated in a situation so altered as mine is, since I felt that they were alive.*

This retrospect of the past took such hold of Shelley, that, according to his habit whenever deeply moved, he gave it shape in verse: "The Retrospect: Cwm Elan, 1812."†

But the fatality which seemed ever to pursue the poet, crying aloud to him as erstwhile to his "Wandering Jew," "On! on!" forbade any long enjoyment of the peaceful happiness of Nantgwilt. The serious illness of Harriet, and the distress caused to his friend Miss Hitchener by scandalous reports concerning herself and him, destroyed his delight in Cwm Elan. What! slander Portia! Slander their pure and ideal affection! And her father dared to forbid her to visit at Shelley's house!

You have agitated her mind until her frame is seriously deranged . . . you may destroy her by disease, but her mind is free; *that* you cannot hurt. . . . Fates give my Harriet health, give my Portia peace, and I will excuse . . . the rest.

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* Letter to Godwin, April 15.

† Published for the first time in Mr. Dowden's "Life of Shelley," Vol. I., p. 270.

"You are," he writes to Portia herself, "you are to my fancy as a thunder-riven pinnacle of rock, firm amid the rushing tempest and the boiling surge. Ay, stand for ever firm, and when our ship anchors close to thee, the crew will cover thee with flowers!"

We smile, as Mr Dowden remarks, "at Shelley's boyish raptures;" but it was the same temperament and the same idealising imagination which, when matured and refined, gave to English poetry the rapture, swift and high, and the shining imagery of the "Epipsychidion."

Pecuniary embarrassments put an end to Shelley's project of settling himself in Wales. He was unable to provide the requisite six or seven hundred pounds. The travellers left Nantgwilt on June 11th and removed to Lynmouth in North Devon. There they dwelt for some weeks in a little cottage, being amply compensated for the poor accommodation by the beauty of the site and surrounding scenery.

It equals . . . Nantgwilt. Mountains certainly of not less perpendicular elevation than a thousand feet are broken abruptly into valleys of indescribable fertility and grandeur. The climate is so mild that myrtles of an immense size twine up our cottage, and roses blow in the open air in winter. In addition to these is the sea which dashes against a rocky and caverned shore, presenting an ever-changing view. All "shows of sky and earth, of sea and valley," are here.

July 5th, 1812.

But Shelley could not enjoy these lovely scenes alone; he needed for the perfect appreciation of their beauty those friends of his soul, the great Godwin, the divine Portia. The latter, in accordance with his counsels, had overcome every obstacle, and was hastening to join him. The poet wished Godwin to be acquainted with so precious a treasure of Deism and Republicanism; and Miss Hitchener had accordingly called upon him on her way through London. The author of "Political Justice" received Shelley's friend as he would have received Shelley himself; nevertheless he allowed her to perceive a consciousness of his own superiority.

From what we know of Shelley's enthusiastic idolatry of Miss Hitchener, we may infer with what transports of mystic tenderness, with what ideal effusiveness he must have welcomed under his roof her whose coming he had hastened in the following words: "I have much to tell you about, innate passions, God, Christianity, etc."* The

* It was agreed between the ladies, who disliked the name of Portia, that she should be called simply Bessy. Hogg gives the following description of Bessy, which does not appear to be overdrawn: "Miss Hitchener was tall and thin, bony and masculine, of a dark complexion, and the symbol of male wisdom, a beard, was not entirely wanting.

enchantment, alas! was of short duration! The immaculate angel soon became the "Brown Demon." So soon as Shelley, truly a spoilt child, had his sublime plaything in his hands, he must needs find out what it was made of; then, the toy being broken, he flung the pieces to the winds.

But meanwhile the early Lynmouth days must be reckoned among the happiest of his life. "His love for Harriet," says Mr. Dowden, "was ardent, and unmarred by fleck or flaw;" and "Love," as he himself wrote at this period, "seems inclined to stay in his prison."* The hour of disenchant-

She was neither young nor old, not handsome—not absolutely ill-looking. She had been a governess, and a schoolmistress, as was sufficiently indicated by a prim, formal, didactic manner and speech."

* On the first of August was Harriet's birthday, and Shelley addressed to her a birthday sonnet, hitherto unpublished:

Ever as now with Love and Virtue's glow
May thy unwithering soul not cease to burn,
Still may thine heart with those pure thoughts o'erflow,
Which force from mine such quick and warm return.

To this date also, Mr. Dowden thinks, we may ascribe an unpublished blank verse poem addressed to Harriet, which is a curious mixture of tenderness and of moral aspirations. The following lines form part of it:

Harriet! let death all mortal ties dissolve,
But ours shall not be mortal! The cold hand

ment with Miss Hitchener had not yet struck; he received letter upon letter from Godwin;* books were sent for from London, to be perused and discussed with Bessy; and his mind was vigorously at work either with new pleas in prose on behalf of liberty of speech, or with enterprises of pith and moment in English verse.†

> Of Time may chill the love of earthly minds,
> Half frozen now; the frigid intercourse
> Of common souls lives but a summer's day;
> . . . But ours!
> . . . Can those eyes
> Beaming with mildest radiance on my heart,
> To purify its purity, e'er bend
> To soothe its vice or consecrate its fears?
> Never, thou second self! Is confidence
> So vain in virtue that I learn to doubt
> The mirror even of Truth? . . .
> Virtue and Love! unbending Fortitude,
> Freedom, Devotedness, and Purity!
> That life my spirit consecrates to you.

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* We regret we cannot give longer extracts from this interesting correspondence, of which the subject was mostly philosophy. One very remarkable letter, a formal pleading against classical education being restricted to the study of antiquity, will be found in Appendix III.

† To this period must be referred an unpublished fragment of three hundred lines entitled "The Voyage," and in all probability, thinks Mr. Dowden, another poem called "A Retrospect of Times of Old." Mr. Dowden thinks it likely that "Queen Mab" took a definite shape at Nantgwilt and at Lynmouth.

Shelley never missed an opportunity during his short life of raising his voice in favour of the liberties of the people, oppressed as they were by tyrannical power; he deemed interference with the right of free speech and a free press to be the worst encroachment on liberty; many a time he boldly defended those who had ventured to defy the resentment and wrath of the political inquisition on free-thought, which seemed to him to be a renewal of the *auto-da-fè* and the stake of the Middle Ages. In May, 1812, a man named Eaton, a London bookseller, was sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment and to the pillory for publishing "a blasphemous libel on the Holy Scriptures," entitled, "The Age of Reason," Part III., by Paine. On June 11th, Shelley wrote to Godwin:

> What do you think of Eaton's trial and sentence? I do not mean to insinuate that this poor bookseller has any characteristics in common with Socrates or Jesus Christ; still the spirit which pillories and imprisons him, is the same which brought them to an untimely end; still, even in this enlightened age, the moralist and reformer may expect coercion analogous to that used with the humble yet zealous imitator of their endeavours. I have thought of addressing the public on the subject, and indeed have begun an outline of the address.

During his stay at Lynmouth, Shelley put the finishing touch to his outspoken pamphlet, addressed to the Lord Chief Justice of England, Lord Ellenborough.*

It breathes the same passionate eloquence as "Queen Mab," which he was then writing, taking refuge in poetry as in a sanctuary which "iron-hearted persecution" was unable to violate.

At the same period he was distributing his Irish pamphlets—"Proposals for an Association," "The Devil's Walk," and the "Declaration of Rights"—about Barnstaple, by the hands of Daniel Healey,† an Irishman in his service, who was consequently arrested on August 19th, and brought before the Mayor of Barnstaple. Healey was convicted of distributing printed pamphlets without the printer's name affixed, and was ordered to pay a fine of £200, or, in default,

* "A Letter to Lord Ellenborough." "This letter," says Mr. Dowden, "has none of the majestic force of Milton's speech on behalf of liberty of unlicensed printing . . . . but it has clearness and vigour, and is certainly superior in style to anything which Shelley had previously written."

† Known hitherto under the *alias* of Hill, Mr. Dowden has reinstated him in his right name. The Irishman was devoted to Shelley, and declared he would go through fire and water for him.

to be imprisoned for six months. There was also a rumour that the author and the printer of the letter to Lord Ellenborough would be prosecuted, and the alarmed printer is said to have destroyed the remaining copies. But such commonplace yet dangerous methods of propaganda were not enough for Shelley; his romantic fancy devised a means of publicity which no Attorney-General could reach—the elements were enlisted in his service; air and water became emissaries of the new gospel of humanity.

"Accordingly, we discover Shelley, accompanied by a tall foreign-looking female, on the Lynmouth beach, pushing certain small boxes—well resined and waxed to keep out the water, and each with mast and sail—from the rocks, or watching from his boat a little flotilla of dark green bottles tightly corked, which rise and sink as the waves sway them seawards; or we see him in the twilight launching his little luminous balloons laden with truth and virtue, into the sky. On returning from such expeditions as these, Shelley would speed his envoys forward on their mission with the breath of good wishes winged by song."

We owe to Mr. Dowden two of these unpublished sonnets:

SONNET TO A BALLOON LADEN WITH KNOWLEDGE.

Bright ball of flame, that thro' the gloom of even
  Silently takest thine ethereal way,
  And with surpassing glory dimm'st each ray,
Twinkling amid the dark-blue depths of Heaven,—
Unlike the fire thou bearest, soon shalt thou
  Fade like a meteor in surrounding gloom,
Whilst that unquenchable is doomed to glow
  A watch-light by the patriot's lonely tomb;
A ray of courage to the oppress and poor;
  A spark, though gleaming on the hovel's hearth,
Which through the tyrant's gilded domes shall roar;
  A beacon in the darkness of the Earth;
A sun which, o'er the renovated scene,
Shall dart like Truth where Falsehood yet has been.

ON LAUNCHING SOME BOTTLES FILLED WITH KNOWLEDGE INTO THE BRITISH CHANNEL.

Vessels of heavenly medicine! may the breeze
Auspicious waft your dark green forms to shore!
Safe may ye stem the wide surrounding roar
Of the wild whirlwinds and the raging seas!
And oh! if Liberty e'er deigned to stoop
  From yonder lovely throne, her crownless brow,
Sure she will breathe around your emerald group
  The fairest breezes of her west that blow.

Yes! she will waft ye to some freeborn soul,
Whose eye-beam, kindling as it meets your freight,
Her heaven-born flame in suffering earth will light,
Until its radiance gleams from pole to pole.
And tyrant hearts with powerless envy burst
To see their night of ignorance dispersed.

Lord Sidmouth, at that time Secretary of State for the Home Department, was warned by an informer, named Henry Drake, of Shelley's movements, and caused him to be watched and followed. Secret reports were sent to him relating every action of the poet: Shelley had been seen in company with a woman throwing suspicious boxes into the sea; one of these on being opened, was found to contain the "Declaration of Rights," and inside a floating bottle another person had found "The Devil's Walk." The Mayor of Barnstaple received instructions to watch the offender; but the poet had escaped the snare, and had vanished from Lynmouth. He had been obliged to borrow the sum of four pounds, nine shillings.

Three weeks later, Godwin, in response to repeated invitations, reached Lynmouth on September 18th. Great was the disappointment of that patriarchal philosopher, who, as Hogg tells us, relying on the liberality of his host,

had not brought sufficient money with him to defray the cost of his journey back to London, and now found himself short of cash in a strange place.

On leaving Lynmouth, Shelley had journeyed to South Wales, and installed himself at Tanyralt, near Tremadoc, Carnarvonshire. The cottage was picturesquely perched on a hill, beneath enormous rocks, and belonged to Mr. Madocks, an Oxford man, and Member of Parliament. It is "a cottage," he wrote to Hogg, "extensive and tasty enough for an Italian prince." Shelley's landlord, in common with all who knew him intimately, was soon charmed with the character and genius of his tenant.

It would have been strange indeed, could Mr. Madocks have remained untouched by Shelley's enthusiastic admiration for the great works he was endeavouring to carry out. The little town of Tremadoc had been built by him on land reclaimed from the encroachments of the sea, and he was now endeavouring to reclaim five thousand acres more of submerged land by means of a vast embankment. Any project for furthering the welfare of mankind claimed

Shelley's whole attention. He united his efforts with those of Mr. Madocks with the same enthusiasm that he had displayed in the Irish crusade. A strong tide having on one occasion destroyed part of the embankment, Shelley proposed at once to call a meeting, and raised a subscription, at the head of which he inscribed his own name for one hundred pounds. Moreover, he undertook to solicit aid from the neighbouring gentry, "in spite of their bigotry and prejudice," and with his three companions travelled to London, there to receive further subscriptions. (October 4th, 1812.)

There were two other great inducements to make the journey to London: to meet Godwin and to see Hogg once more.

It is easy to guess with what affection the Socrates of Skinner Street must have received a first visit from his disciple, who, although hitherto unknown to, and separated by distance from him, seemed to be almost one of his own family. Godwin welcomed him as a friend or son, and a day seldom passed without long conferences between them on metaphysics, morals, politics, on spirit and matter, atheism, utility and truth,

the clergy, the Church, or the characteristics of German thought and literature. Godwin's young daughters must have looked on the novelist, the poet, the champion of Ireland, as a hero or demi-god. Shelley does not appear to have bestowed much notice on the two younger girls, Clare and Mary; he was most attracted by Mary Wollstonecraft's first-born daughter—poor Fanny Imlay!—a gentle and melancholy creature, who four years later was destined to follow her mother's example and drown herself in the Thames.*

Hogg was absent for the vacation, and Shelley awaited his return to London to renew a friendship so disastrously interrupted. The wound had been healed by time, and when they met again all the past was forgotten.

Shelley took the opportunity of the visit to London to rid his household of her whom he now called "the Brown Demon." His early illusion had been dispelled, and the poor Sussex schoolmistress now appeared as she really was, or even worse, a strong-minded but

* A correct version of this occurrence is given by the Author in another place.

vulgar woman, an insupportable and ridiculous blue-stocking; and most absurd of all, she imagined herself a poet! Yet may not this delusion have been partly Shelley's own fault?* At a later period he used to relate, laughing till the tears ran down his face, that at Lynmouth Miss Hitchener had written an ode on the emancipation of her sex, the first line of which ran as follows:

All, all are men—women and all!

On her return to her school he undertook, somewhat ungraciously, to allow her an annuity of forty or fifty pounds, in order to repair as far as possible the injury he had done her.† And on December 3rd, he wrote to Hogg on the subject in these words:

The Brown Demon, as we call our late tormentor and schoolmistress, must receive her stipend. . . . She was deprived by our misjudging haste of a situation where she

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* Mr. Dowden quotes some lines of a poem by Miss Hitchener, which appeared in 1822, the year of Shelley's death, and "proves that its author, though not a poet, was a woman of some culture and vigour of mind."

† Mr. Dowden says the sum was £100.

was going on smoothly, and now she says that her reputation is gone, her health ruined, her peace of mind destroyed by my barbarity; a complete victim. . . . This is not all fact; but certainly she is embarrassed and poor, and we being in some degree the cause, we ought to obviate it. She is an artificial, superficial, ugly, hermaphrodite woman, and my astonishment at my fatuity, inconsistency, and bad taste was never so great as after living for four months with her as an inmate. What would Hell be were such a woman in Heaven? *

During his sojourn in London, Shelley formed an intimacy with Mr. Newton and his family, which was not without influence on the moral direction of his mind, and the connections he subsequently formed. Mr. Newton was an ardent vegetarian; not content with practising the system, he had just published an essay on its virtues, entitled, "A Return to Nature." Shelley was struck with the admirable health and beauty

* With reference to this change in Shelley's opinions Mr. Dowden quotes in Miss Hitchener's favour the testimony of an acquaintance of Shelley's who saw her at her father's house after her return to Sussex. "She was sitting alone, with one of Shelley's works before her. Her fine black eye lighted up, her well-formed Roman countenance was full of animation, when I spoke of Shelley." She resumed her former profession, and conducted a girls' school with success. Her pupils spoke of her as "a high-principled, clever woman, with a remarkable capacity for teaching."

of Mr. Newton's children, who had been brought up on vegetarian principles. "They are the most beautiful and healthy creatures it is possible to conceive, their dispositions the most gentle and conciliating."

He perused the "Return to Nature," which he terms a "luminous and eloquent essay," and borrowed from it in great measure the arguments in favour of vegetarianism which he urges in one of the notes to "Queen Mab." His friendship with the Newtons confirmed him in the practice of the Pythagorean system, which he had begun in Ireland, and to which he ever afterwards adhered.

His departure from London was accelerated by financial embarrassments; and he left the metropolis without even taking leave of the Godwins,* and addresses the "miserable city" in a farewell poem, in which he praises enthusiastically the vales and hills of wild Cambria, the sole asylum, he thinks, of liberty and virtue. Mr. Dowden gives us part of the poem:

* He apologises for the omission in a lively letter to Fanny, who had reproached him for his abrupt and uncivil departure.

ON LEAVING LONDON FOR WALES.

Hail to thee, Cambria! for the unfettered wind
  Which from thy wilds even now methinks I feel
Chasing the clouds that roll in wrath behind,
  And tightening the soul's laxest nerves to steel.
True mountain Liberty alone may heal
  The pain which Custom's obduracies bring,
And he who dares in fancy even to steal
  One draught from Snowdon's ever sacred spring
Blots out the unholiest rede of worldly witnessing.

And shall that soul, to selfish peace resigned,
  So soon forget the woe its fellows share?
Can Snowdon's Lethe from the freeborn mind
  So soon the page of injured penury tear?
Does this fine mass of human passion dare
  To sleep, unhonouring the patriot's fall,
Or life's sweet load in quietude to bear,
  While millions famish even in Luxury's hall,
And Tyranny high-raisèd stern lowers on all?

No, Cambria! never may thy matchless vales
  A heart so false to hope and virtue shield;
Nor ever may thy spirit-breathing gales
  Waft freshness to the slaves who dare to yield.
For me! . . . The weapon that I burn to wield
  I seek amid thy rocks to ruin hurled,
That Reason's flag may over Freedom's field,
  Symbol of bloodless victory, wave unfurled,
A meteor-sign of love effulgent o'er the world.

Do thou, wild Cambria, calm each struggling thought,
  Cast thy sweet veil of rocks and woods between,
That by the soul to indignation wrought
  Mountains and dells be mingled with the scene:

Let me for ever be what I have been,
But not for ever at my needy door
Let misery linger speechless, pale, and lean.
I am the friend of the unfriended poor.*
Let me not madly stain their righteous cause in gore.

A certain amount of discouragement is revealed in the poet's verse, and perhaps a feeling of regret that even for a moment he should have subordinated the high interests of humanity to which his genius should be exclusively devoted, to a private enterprise of uncertain results.

He had failed of success in London with regard to the Tremadoc embankment, and perceived he had thoughtlessly engaged himself in an affair from which it would be best to withdraw, and return to poetry. His home, moreover, was full of charm: "When I come home to Harriet I am the happiest of the happy." His young wife identified herself to the utmost with his ideas and aspirations, studying various subjects under his direction, Latin

* Mr. Madocks bears witness to the truth of these words. "I have often heard Mr. Madocks dilate," writes Medwin, "on Shelley's numerous acts of benevolence, his relieving the distresses of the poor, visiting them in their humble abodes, and supplying them with food, and raiment, and fuel during the winter."

especially; she could already read some Odes of Horace, and purposed writing a Latin letter to Hogg. She had readily conformed to the Pythagorean system. Her fresh young voice, singing old Irish melodies, lent a charm to the winter evenings, and the anticipation of the birth of a child was an additional source of happiness. Shelley was thus independent of the society of his neighbours at Tremadoc, and wrote of them to Hookham the bookseller: "There is more philosophy in one square inch of your counter than in the whole of Cambria."

Two important events marked the latter part of Shelley's sojourn at Tanyralt — this acquaintance with Leigh Hunt and the completion of "Queen Mab."

Hunt had boldly attacked, in the *Examiner*, the character and private life of the Prince Regent, whom Shelley had described in his Irish pamphlets as forgetful of the teaching of the great Fox. Not satisfied with calling him *an Adonis of fifty,* Hunt had proved that that "delightful, wise, agreeable, virtuous, sincere and immortal Prince was a violator of his word, a libertine over head and ears in disgrace, a

despiser of domestic ties, a companion of gamblers and demireps, a man who had reached the age of fifty without acquiring any claim to gratitude from his country, or respect from posterity."

Thanks to Lord Ellenborough's charges to the jury, and notwithstanding the eloquent speeches on their behalf by their counsel (Brougham), Leigh Hunt and his brother were sentenced to two years' imprisonment and a fine of five hundred pounds each.

"To this imprisonment," says Hunt, "I owe my acquaintance with the friend of friends, Shelley. He wrote to me with a princely offer of help, which at that time I did not need."

Shelley wrote on the subject to his bookseller, Hookham, in February, 1813:

I am boiling with indignation at the horrible injustice and tyranny of the sentence pronounced on Hunt and his brother. . . . Surely the seal of abjectness and slavery is indelibly stamped upon the character of England.

Although I do not retract in the slightest degree my wish for a subscription for the widows and children of those poor men hung at York, yet this £1000 which the Hunts are sentenced to pay is an affair of more consequence. Hunt is a brave, a good, and an enlightened man. Surely the public, for whom Hunt has done so much, will repay in part the great debt of obligation which they owe the champion of their liberties and virtues; or are they dead, cold, stone-

hearted, and insensible—brutalized by centuries of unremitting bondage? . . .

I am rather poor at present; but I have £20 which is not immediately wanted. Pray begin a subscription for the Hunts; put my name down for that sum. . . . Oh! that I might wallow for one night in the Bank of England!

"Queen Mab" is finished and transcribed. I am now preparing the notes, which will be long and philosophical. You will receive it with the other poems.

"Queen Mab" is Shelley's first serious long poem, and it gives us the sum of his intellectual life up to that date.

Although "Queen Mab" marks a decisive step in Shelley's poetical career, he was conscious of its shortcomings and defects even while sending it for publication.

"My poems," he writes in January, 1813, "will, I fear, little stand the criticism even of friendship; some of the later ones * have the merit of conveying a meaning in every word, and all are faithful pictures of my feelings at the time of writing them. But they are in a great measure abrupt and obscure—all breathing hatred to government and religion. . . . One fault they are indisputably exempt from, that of being a volume of *fashionable literature*."

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* The poems to which Shelley here alludes, and which he intended to publish in Ireland, are in a manuscript in his own handwriting, containing 2,822 lines. Mr. Dowden first disclosed to the world the existence of this manuscript.

"In spite of its various errors I am determined to give it to the world," he writes to Hookham on sending the manuscript. He orders the books to be in quarto, and on good paper, to attract the aristocracy. "They will not read it," he says, "but their daughters may."

It is certain that Shelley included "Queen Mab" among those of his poems that possessed little merit beyond the absence of vulgarity and the expression of the twofold hatred with which his soul was filled. Yet "Queen Mab" was more than this. It was a serious endeavour to establish on a philosophical basis his project of reformation for the world, which was the one passion of his life and the principal inspiration of his genius. It is very difficult to class this poem from a metaphysical point of view, in a defined and precise system with Hume or Spinoza. Neither the latter nor Kant, ever strongly influenced Shelley, who was only beginning to read Spinoza when he put the finishing touches to his poem. In order fully to comprehend the influences under which he composed "Queen Mab," we must study the notes that display his philosophical knowledge, and expound didactically his views on physics

and morals. Thus he quotes the fine lines from Ecclesiastes: "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth for ever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose.'

> Thus do the generations of the earth
> Go to the grave, and issue from the womb.

And from Lucretius the admirable passage commencing,

> Suave mari magno . . .

to justify his bold departure from the beaten track in which humanity strays far from the true way of life. Rousseau supplies him with arguments in favour of the equality which ought to be established among men; La Place, Cabanis, and Bailly, suggest his astronomical and scientific views. He finds in Robinet's "Système de la Nature," which he himself translated, in Pliny the Elder, Lord Bacon, Locke, Hume, Newton, and Condorcet, proofs of that scientific Atheism which he opposes to the absurdities of theology.

The celebrated work by Volney, "Les Ruines" —a popular exposition, in poetical and biblical language, of the eighteenth-century philosophy— suggested to him the plan, and even the frame-

work, of his poem. Volney's genius, who looses the mortal coil of his traveller, and bears him, like a light vapour, into the upper regions, becomes the fairy Mab, the personification of the poetic imagination, revealing to the spirit of Ianthe,* separated from her body, the history of Good and Evil on the earth, and the future destiny of regenerated mankind.

If Nature (or God) is innocent of the evils of humanity, then man himself must be the principle of those evils; and here Shelley contrasts innocent Nature with its opposite, Custom, the very source of hypocrisy, depravity, religion, and tyranny; of money, war, prostitution, and all the crime and suffering in the world. All this, we shall be told, is declamatory and vulgar. We may admit it to be declamatory—Shelley is partly open to that reproach—but certainly it is not vulgar; for Shelley, even when uttering the truisms of metaphysical and moral commonplace, always displayed originality and vigour of form and expression which take hold upon you, and

* A Greek name, signifying *violet*, taken by Shelley from Ovid's "Metamorphoses,"

"Potiturque suâ Iphis Ianthe."

This was the name of his eldest daughter.

make you forget whatever is redundant, exaggerated, or inflated in his style. We are quite of Mr. Rossetti's opinion on this matter:

> The part of "Queen Mab" which has some considerable amount of promise, and even of positive merit at times, is the declamatory part—the passages of flexible and sonorous blank verse in which Shelley boils over against kings or priests, or the present misery of the world of man and in acclaiming augury of an era of regeneration. These passages, with all their obvious literary crudities and imperfections, are, in their way, of real mark, and not easily to be overmatched by other poetic writing of that least readable sort, the didactic-declamatory.

With the exception of M. de Lamennais's "Paroles d'un Croyant," we know of nothing that can be compared with them. Mr. Dowden has admirably defined the tendencies and spirit of "Queen Mab" in the following words:

> Seldom before in English poetry had the unity of Nature and the universality of law—the idea of a cosmos—been expressed with more precision or a more ardent conviction. Seldom before in poetry had the vast and ceaseless flow of Being—restless, yet subject to a constant law of evolution and development—been so vividly conceived. Nature, or as Shelley preferred to say, the Spirit of Nature, acting necessarily, and at present producing indifferently good and evil, giving birth alike to the hero, the martyr, the bigot, the tyrant, poisonous serpent, and innocent lamb, yet tends unconsciously upward to nobler developments, purging itself

of what is weak and base. Shelley's spirit, which circles half mournfully, half exultingly, above the ruins of the past, which rises on the wing, and screams at sight of all the oppressions and frauds done under the sun in this our day, flies to the future and embraces it with a lover's joy. . . . That his ideal of the future golden age may be smiled at by common sense as impracticable and impossible, need give us small offence. In following the sun he loses his way in a radiant cloudland; yet still, amid bright voluminous folds of error, he is on the track of the sun.

Shelley himself, however, has passed judgment on this poem more severely than any other critic has done. "Queen Mab" having been surreptitiously printed in London in 1821, while Shelley was in Italy, he wrote the following letter to the editor of the *Examiner*:

TO THE "EXAMINER."

June 22nd, 1821.

A poem, entitled "Queen Mab," was written by me at the age of eighteen—I dare say in a sufficiently intemperate spirit. I have not seen this production for several years; I doubt not but that it is perfectly worthless in point of literary composition; and that in all that concerns moral and political speculation, as well as in the subtler discriminations of metaphysical and religious doctrine, it is still more crude and immature. I am a devoted enemy to religious, political, and domestic oppression, and I regret this publication, not so much from literary vanity, as because I fear it is better fitted to injure than to serve the sacred cause of freedom.

If the publication of "Queen Mab" was not, as Shelley feared, injurious to the cause of liberty in general, it was injurious at least to his own liberty, for it became the pretext of all the persecution to which he was thenceforth subjected. Few indeed were the chosen spirits who could distinguish between the man and the Atheist in the poem, and divine the great future poet in the author of "Queen Mab."

In the summer of 1820, Trelawney, who had not at that time heard of Shelley, was at Lausanne, and made the acquaintance of one of those few booksellers whose knowledge extends beyond indexes and catalogues. This man read and understood the books he sold in every European tongue. On one occasion Trelawney found him sitting under Gibbon's acacia trees and absorbed in the perusal of an English book. "I can read your modern English poets," said the bookseller, "your Byron, Scott, and Moore, and understand them as I walk along; but I have got hold of a book by one now that makes me stop and take breath. It was lying among a lot of new English books that I had not yet opened, when a priest happened to pass by and took it up. After a brief glance

at the notes he exploded in wrath, shouting out: 'Infidel! Jacobin! Leveller! Nothing can stop this spread of blasphemy but the stake and the faggot; the world is retrograding into accursed heathenism and anarchy!'

"When the priest had departed, I took up the small book he had thrown down, saying: 'Surely there must be something here worth tasting.' You know the proverb: No person throws a stone at a tree that does not bear fruit. It was Shelley's 'Queen Mab.' The fruit is crude to my taste, but well flavoured; it requires a strong stomach to digest it; the writer is an enthusiast and has the true spirit of a poet; he aims at regenerating humanity, not, like Byron and Moore, pulling it down. They say he is but a boy, and this his first offering; if that be true, we shall hear of him again."

History has not transmitted to us the name of the excellent bookseller of Lausanne, but it is certain the he possessed more sense and critical acumen than all the English Reviewers of the period put together.

CHAPTER X.

SHELLEY IN DUBLIN—IN LONDON—AT BRACKNELL, EDINBURGH, WINDSOR—HIS SEPARATION FROM HARRIET—1813–1814.

On March 9th, 1813, Shelley was once more in Dublin. He had suddenly left Tanyralt, borrowing £20 from Hookham for the purpose, in consequence of a strange adventure which has much exercised the minds of his biographers. On the night of February 26th, a night of storm and rain, his assassination had been attempted under highly mysterious and improbable circumstances. Most of Shelley's biographers are of opinion that the nocturnal attack was but a figment of his imagination, one of those hallucinations which, according to Peacock, would be best treated by "three well-peppered mutton chops."

But the details furnished by numerous extant letters are too circumstantial to admit of such an explanation. Equally inadmissible is the theory of his enemies that he himself had invented the story to facilitate his departure without paying his debts. However this may be, Shelley left Tanyralt in all haste for Dublin, where Jack Lawless received him with open arms.

Hogg, on learning the abrupt departure of the poet, relinquished his promised visit to Tanyralt and followed his friend to Dublin. But on arriving at Shelley's address in Cuffe Street, he learned from Mr. Lawless, the owner of the house, that his lately-arrived guests had taken flight for Killarney. Hogg, after inspecting the Irish capital, took his way back philosophically enough to London, where he was joined by Shelley a few days later. The guardian angel had been left behind with the books.

"I found Bysshe and Harriet," writes Hogg, "in a hotel at the West End; they were both well and in good spirits; the lady was as bright, blooming, and placid as ever. They expressed much regret at my fruitless expedition, and most kindly condoled with me. . . . They complained bitterly of the fatigue, expense, and hideous improbity of their long and barbarous course. Their wearied souls were brimful

of the recollections of discomfort and miseries endured at Killarney; where, that they might be more thoroughly wretched, they had occupied a cottage situated upon an island in the lake. . . .

"Bysshe discoursed with animation and eloquent astonishment of the perilous navigation of the lakes; of sudden gusts and treacherous whirlwinds; how vessels were swamped and sunk in a moment; and he related with implicit faith tales savouring somewhat of Milesian exaggeration and credulity. . . . He made no secret of his satisfaction" at having got rid of Eliza, "but often gave vent to his feelings with his accustomed frankness and energy. The good Harriet smiled in silence, and looked very sly; she did not dare to express her joy, if she really rejoiced at the absence of her affectionate and tiresome sister. . . . The deliverance was of brief duration, surprisingly brief, for in an incredibly short space of time Eliza reappeared and resumed her sovereign functions. . . . Harriet gave visible promise of being about to provide an heir for an ancient and illustrious house; and, like all little women, she looked very large upon the occasion. She was in excellent voice, and fonder than ever of reading aloud; she promptly seized every opportunity of indulging her taste; she took up the first book that came to hand as soon as I entered the room, and the reading commenced. Sir William Drummond's 'Academical Questions,' Smith's 'Theory of Moral Sentiments,' some of Bishop Berkeley's works, Southey's 'Chronicle of the Cid,' had taken the place of 'Telemachus,' 'Belisarius,' Volney's 'Ruins,' and the other works which she had formerly read to me."

On reaching London, Shelley, who had incurred further debts for his travelling expenses, endeavoured in vain to conciliate his father by

letter. After wasting many precious hours in useless negotiations with Mr. Timothy Shelley's advisers, he removed from his hotel, which was ill suited for poetical composition, and took lodgings in Half-moon Street.

"There was a little projecting window," says Hogg, "in Half-moon Street, in which Shelley might be seen from the street all day long, book in hand, with lively gestures and bright eyes; so that Mrs. Newton said he wanted only a pan of clear water and a fresh turf to look like some young lady's lark, hanging outside for air and song. . . . The little room on the first floor . . . soon grew into a miniature library; books were arranged in rows on the floor, in the recesses on each side of the fireplace, . . . on tables and chairs and heaped up under tables in confusion. . . . In one recess remained, but little disturbed by any of us, in a long row, a Latin . . . translation of the works of Emmanuel Kant—the leaves uncut."

Hogg and Shelley had resumed their old habits of 1811, walking, studying, and arguing together; and, as in former times, Hogg often dined at his friend's table. The nature of the repast was the only change, but Hogg had little liking for vegetarianism. He was not indifferent to the comforts of life; he was accustomed to them, and could not recall without regret the pleasant Oxford times, that University "where," he says, "one was forced, whether

or no, to live comfortably in spite of oneself." He thought all young ladies angelic, but never more so than when handing you a large cup of strong, good tea. Shelley's frugal fare was not to his taste; he could not, like his friend, rush into the first baker's shop when hungry, buy a loaf, and eat it as he strode along, with the occasional addition of raisins. A sweet panada, that Shelley had learned how to prepare from a French lady, and that he thought delicious, was particularly odious to Hogg. He deplored the culinary inexperience of the good Harriet, who once in her life had had the opportunity of learning how to make tea-cakes from Mrs. Southey, at Keswick, but had not learned, and who, when asked what was to be for dinner, would reply: "Whatever you please."

"Once," says Hogg, "I had dropped a word, a hint about a pudding. 'A pudding,' Bysshe said dogmatically, 'is a prejudice.' I have wished that the converse of the proposition were true, and that a prejudice was a pudding, and then, according to the judgment of my more enlightened young friends, I should never have been without one. . . . Our only resource against absolute starvation was tea."*

* Tea was always Shelley's favourite beverage; he praised

Hogg endeavoured, though vainly, to introduce Shelley into his own circle—the official world, the world of fashion, and society. As he was on terms of friendship with the Countess of Oxford, one of the leaders of fashion, he spoke to her in warm praise of his friend, and she expressed a desire to make Shelley's acquaintance, but Shelley probably declined the honour. Hogg also wished to make Shelley acquainted with a man who, at that time, enjoyed a great reputation for eloquence and learning, the celebrated Dr. Samuel Parr, a Liberal divine (we have had many such in France since that epoch).* But this too failed, for Bysshe had not the smallest inclination for the society of a pedagogue wrapped up in his own infallibility; "to ask him to converse with a schoolmaster, was like telling him to go back to Eton and have a plea-

it poetically in his Letter to Maria Gisborne, and jestingly called himself in one sense a *theist.*

* Hogg says amusingly with reference to this subject: "A Whig divine is placed in a very critical position, between two fires; he has to try and make his way, to creep to the paradise of a bishoprick—a long and narrow bridge, narrow as the edge of a razor; he must not compromise his orthodoxy on the one hand, or his Liberality on the other."

sant chat with old Keate, or with the Oxford bigwigs."

Shelley preferred the society of ladies who would learn from him, to that of reverend divines. "He was an especial favourite of the fair sex; he was cherished as the apple of beauty's eye; he was often called by names of endearment, such as Ariel, and Oberon, and spoken of by the ladies of his acquaintance as the Elfin King, the King of Fairyland, and under other affectionate titles. Elegant society was deemed to be his proper element, and to adorn it his natural vocation; to bring him into this sphere, and keep him in it, was the anxious care of several amiable and charming creatures." But this was not always easy of accomplishment.

As capricious and elusive as a sylph or gnome, Shelley easily forgot, in some day-dream or poetic vision, his promises and engagements. "When he was caught, brought up in custody, and turned over to the ladies with 'Behold your King!' to be caressed, courted, admired, and flattered, the king of beauty and fancy would too commonly bolt, slip away, steal out, creep off" . . . vanish like a magician. Hogg compares his strange

disappearances to those of a goat, who is said to pass one hour of the twenty-four every day in the infernal regions:

I have sometimes seen him standing a long while watching a goat patiently, and following it, for I had related the superstitious legend to him, and it captivated his fancy and pleased him prodigiously; and he would eye a goat, that came unexpectedly towards him, eagerly, and inquire with penetrating asking glances, "What news from Hades?"

If he was in company with two or three young ladies at bedtime, they would continue to sit with him, hearing him and asking him questions. He took no note of time, and never thought of retiring himself, and the quiet hours of night glided away like moments. . . . Sometimes the conversation was prolonged to cockcrow, and terminated with a walk and breakfast. The mammas were obliged to intervene and despatch the young Adonis to his bed. . . . Never was so potent a spell, so wonderful a charm, exercised by any other individual, however gifted. What in the world did Bysshe say to his charmed and charming watchwomen? I have often essayed—perhaps with a profane hand, and therefore in vain—to raise the veil that covered the face of the mystical Isis. . . . I have asked again and again the fair interlocutresses for some samples of the nightly dialogues, but I never obtained more than general expressions of vague delight. . . . I have often wished that a shorthand writer had been placed behind a screen during Bysshe's nightly colloquies, to catch and secure for ever on paper a philosophical apocalypse of which the duration was unhappily so transient. What a delightful and precious appendix to an imperfect biography would the notes of the shorthand writer afford!

One day Hogg and Shelley were invited to attend a conference of ladies zealous for the emancipation of their sex. The subject of debate was the important question of stays. Hogg alone presented himself. On a table covered with green baize were exhibited plaster casts, prints, etchings, and a rabbit cut open so as to expose the interior, including the lungs. The subject under discussion was the injurious effect of stays on women. The lecturer having demonstrated her thesis upon the casts, and the rabbit, and numerous exhibits of crooked shoulders, curved spines, and contracted chests, addressed herself to Hogg: "Have I not plainly proved that Providence did not intend us to wear stays?" "I am not very competent to decide the question," replied Hogg, "but I am fully convinced, and you have fully proved, that Providence never intended a buck rabbit to wear stays." "Is it possible the rabbit is not a doe?" said the poor lady, quite confounded. A long silence ensued; the fair lecturer was evidently perplexed as to the sex of her anatomical subject.

When she had recovered herself, Shelley became the topic of conversation, the traitorous Shelley who had promised to be present at the

conference and had failed to keep his word. The fair lecturer spoke of him with animation and enthusiasm; if he would but speak out clearly on the great, the important subject of stays, the decision of such an intellect as his would instantly close the discussion. Not another pair of stays would be bought or worn in all Europe!

Shelley was beginning to found a school. A band of believers in human perfectibility and in the Millennium were ready to be his disciples, to the great amusement of Hogg, who bespoke for his share in the New Jerusalem "the first floor in a commodious house hollowed out of one huge emerald." To which Shelley replied sadly: "You laugh at everything. I am convinced that there can be no entire regeneration of mankind until drollery has disappeared from the world!"

"Queen Mab," printed at the end of May, 1813, and distributed among Shelley's friends, had a certain success in London. Hogg tells us that strangers of both sexes forced their way into the Shelleys' lodgings to make the acquaintance of the poet. Enthusiastic vegetarians, religious reformers, unsuccessful poets with suicidal mania, melancholy and dreamy women, bores of all sorts,

intruded their presence and were passed on to Hogg by the poet. "It was more than intrusion, it was *obtrusion*, and the word is not strong enough. One person would give Italian lessons to Harriet, another lessons in Hebrew or Arabic to Eliza; a still greater number forced themselves in without excuse or pretext."

Among their eccentric and extraordinary visitors was a certain Knight of Malta, Sir James Lawrence by name, who had acquired celebrity as the author of a philosophical novel entitled "The History of the Nairs." This rose-coloured tale of India, "too rose-coloured," says Hogg, "too much like Tom Moore's honey-dew," became a rage with the Shelleys; even Eliza pronounced it to be a delightful book. Shelley was greatly impressed by it, and more fully convinced than ever of the immorality of legal marriage.

One of Shelley's most familiar haunts was the house of Mr. Newton, where he was received as belonging to the family.* The author of "A

* Mrs. Newton's daughter says: "My mother, who was uncommonly musical (indeed, as Dussek said himself, his most gifted and best pupil), often passed her evenings playing with two of the first-rate musicians in London, viz., Solomon and another. Dear Shelley, instead of listening to the trios,

Return to Nature" was not satisfied with leading mankind back to Nature by the practice of the Pythagorean diet, but to this he added an Eden-like absence of attire, and carried it out in his own family.

"On a Sunday, in the summer," writes Hogg, "we took a walk together, wandering about, as usual, for a long time without plan or purpose. About five o'clock Bysshe stopped suddenly at the door of a house in a fashionable street, ascended the steps hastily, and delivered one of his superb bravura knocks.

"'What are we going to do here?'

"'It is here we dine.'

"He placed me before him, that I might enter first, as the stranger; the door was thrown wide open, and a strange spectacle presented itself. There were five naked figures in the passage hastening to meet us. The first was a boy of twelve years, the last a little girl of five; the other three children, the two eldest of them being girls, were of intermediate ages, between the two extremes. As soon as they saw me, they uttered a piercing cry, turned round, and ran wildly upstairs, screaming aloud. The stairs presented the appearance of Jacob's Ladder, with the angels ascending it, except that they had no wings, and they moved faster and made more noise than the ordinary representations of the Patriarch's vision indicate. From the window of the nursery at the top of the house the children had seen the beloved Shelley—had scampered downstairs in single file to welcome

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would take us children into a corner, and there in a low and sepulchral voice tell us stories of ghosts and goblins to which we listened with fixed interest and attention."

him ; me, the kill-joy, they had not observed. I was presented to a truly elegant family, and I found everything in the best taste, and was highly gratified with my reception, and with the estimable acquisition to the number of my friends. Nothing was said about the first strange salutation, nor did I venture to inquire what it signified. After dinner, Bysshe asked why the children did not come into the room to the dessert, as usual. The lady of the house coloured slightly, and said Shelley should see them by-and-by, in the nursery, but they did not dare to show themselves in the dining-room. They were all too much ashamed at having been seen, as they were, so unexpectedly, by a stranger ! Nothing more transpired to clear up the mystery of their nudity. At subsequent visits, the whole system was unfolded. . . . In order to prepare mankind for the happy impending restoration of perfect and universal nudity, children ought to be accustomed at an early age to be, at least occasionally, naked. . . . The mistress of the family assured us that she frequently remained for hours without her clothes, and derived much advantage from the complete exposure to the air. She never seemed to have much the matter with her ; and in imaginative persons fancy sways their feelings and convictions. 'I rose early this morning, and having locked myself into my dressing-room, or undressing-room, I remained for three hours stark-naked. I am all the better for it, I assure you ; I always am. I feel so innocent during the rest of the day !' . . . I gained some credit by communicating that I had sometimes nakedised, under the authority and by the advice of the celebrated Dr. Franklin, who wrote with earnestness in commendation of air-baths, for so he called and esteemed the remaining naked for some hours in the early morning. . . . Except on my first visit, the dear children never appeared naked before me ; before Bysshe they often did. It is for his credit's sake that I state it. I was of the earth, earthy ; he was of the heaven,

heavenly ;—I was a worldling ; he had already returned to Nature, or rather he had never quitted her. He was a pure spirit, in the Divine likeness of the Archangel Gabriel ; the peace-breathing, lily-bearing annunciator. Whether the charming lady might not, without tarnish or discredit, have appeared before him robed only in her innocency, as she was wont to sit during the early morning hours, I will not presume to determine ; it is, at all events, certain that she never did so."

At the Newtons' Shelley also made the acquaintance of a lady who for a time profoundly influenced his life and intellect : this was Madame de Boinville, Mrs. Newton's sister. They were the daughters of Mr. Collins, a wealthy planter at St. Vincent, and a staunch admirer of the new France. Madame de Boinville had adopted and even exceeded the Liberal views of her father, wearing a red sash, and calling herself a child of the Revolution. Among the Constitutional *émigrés* who frequented her father's house she had noticed one who, although still a young man, had played no insignificant part in the early days of the Revolution. M. de Boinville, who had been formerly a *fermier-général*, and a friend of La Fayette and André Chénier, was reduced to poverty by the emigration. He won the affections of the young Republican lady, and

they had been married by the Gretna Green blacksmith, previous to a more formal ceremony. Under the Consulate, M. de Boinville returned to France. Madame de Boinville accompanied him, and suffered much annoyance from the Imperial police. It is even related that, on the occasion of one of her journeys between Paris and London, she was taken prisoner at the Hague, but her jailer was so impressed by her beauty that he allowed her to escape. M. de Boinville accepted service under Napoleon, and received a high appointment in the Commissariat of the Grand Army. He died at Wilna in 1813. His widow was still suffering from the shock of bereavement when she first became acquainted with Shelley. Her troubled life had early whitened her hair,* and the contrast between her snow-white locks and her youthful countenance reminded Shelley of the mysterious spinner in Southey's "Thalaba," Maimuna, by whose name he used to call her:

> Her face was as a damsel's face,
> And yet her hair was gray.

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* The above sketch of the Boinvilles is taken from Mr. Dowden, who derives it from Mr. Thomas Constable's "Memoir of the Rev. C. A. Chastel de Boinville."

It is easy to understand how such a woman must have influenced Shelley.

The recollection of the enchantress lasted much longer than his intimacy with her in London. In 1819 he wrote from Rome to his friend Peacock concerning Madame de Boinville and her daughter Cornelia :

> So you know the Boinvilles? I could not help considering Mrs. B., when I knew her, as the most admirable specimen of a human being I had ever seen. Nothing earthly ever appeared to me more perfect than her character and manners. It is improbable that I shall ever meet again the person whom I so much esteemed, and still admire. I wish, however, that when you see her, you would tell her that I have not forgotten her, nor any of the amiable circle once assembled round her. . . . Cornelia, though so young when I saw her, gave indications of her mother's excellencies ; and certainly less fascinating, is, I doubt not, equally amiable and more sincere. It was hardly possible for a person, of the extreme subtlety and delicacy of Mrs. Boinville's understanding and affections, to be quite sincere and constant.

Besides the charm of their delightful companionship, Shelley's friends furnished him with a new source of intellectual and literary enjoyment. Mrs. Boinville and her daughter Cornelia initiated him into the language of Dante and Tasso, and, under their guidance, he threw himself

into the study of Italian with his habitual ardour for any intellectual pursuit. With his friend Hogg he read "La Gerusalemme Liberata."

"With mingled feelings," says the latter, "of pleasure and regret we both quitted the graceful, tender, pious epic, being in our hearts more than half Crusaders, and not altogether indisposed to enlist under the consecrated banners of Godfrey."

Ariosto fascinated Shelley; he eagerly devoured the "Orlando Furioso," returning to it constantly, reading it again and again; while Hogg was progressing slowly and methodically with the aid of grammar and dictionary, Shelley read the forty-four cantos of the "Orlando" several times. Dante was postponed. A melancholy female friend, who found consolation for her imaginary sufferings only in the poetry of Petrarch, read with Shelley the "Canzoni" of that great master of lyric verse; he drank with delight at the pure and ideal spring, while Hogg, to the horror of the lady and her disciple, ridiculed the platonic passion of the stout canon of Padua, who sang of love and kissed his maid-servant between a good breakfast and a better dinner.

At the end of June, 1813, a babe was born

to Shelley, a little daughter, to whom he gave the name of Ianthe Elizabeth. Hogg gives us to understand that in Harriet's composition there was more of vanity and egotism than of maternal affection :

> I often asked Harriet to let me see her little girl, but she always made some excuse. She was asleep, being dressed, or had gone out, or was unwell. The child had some blemish, though not a considerable one, in one of her eyes ; and this, I believe, was the true and only reason why her mother did not choose to exhibit her. She could not bear, herself a beauty, that I should know (such was her weakness) that one so nearly connected with herself was not perfectly beautiful.

Shortly afterwards it became necessary to operate on the little Ianthe for a tumour. Against the wish of the surgeon, Harriet insisted on being present, and watched the progress of the operation without a sign of emotion. The surgeon declared subsequently that he had never met a woman like her, that she must have been altogether without feeling.*

Hogg says that Shelley had no affection for his child and took no interest in her ; but Peacock,

* Ianthe Shelley married Mr. Esdaile, and died in 1876. Mr. Dowden defends Harriet from Hogg's censure.

who is a faithful witness to that epoch in the poet's life, gives us a different and more credible account. "He was extremely fond of his child," he writes, "and would walk up and down a room with it in his arms for a long time together, singing to it a monotonous melody of his own making, which ran on the repetition of a word of his own making. His song was 'Yáhmani, Yáhmani, Yáhmani, Yáhmani' . . . . it pleased the child, and lulled it when it was fretful; . . . . he was pre-eminently an affectionate father." Mr. Dowden has transcribed for us a precious record of Shelley's love for his little Ianthe, an unpublished sonnet, written in September, 1813, three months after her birth:

TO IANTHE.

I love thee, Baby, for thine own sweet sake:
Those azure eyes, that faintly dimpled cheek,
Thy tender frame so eloquently weak,
Love in the sternest heart of hate might wake;
But more, when o'er thy fitful slumber bending,
Thy mother folds thee to her wakeful heart,
Whilst love and pity in her glances blending
All that thy passive eyes can feel impart;
More, when some feeble lineaments of her
Who bore thy weight beneath her spotless bosom,

> As with deep love I read thy face, recur ;
> More dear art thou, O fair and fragile blossom,
> Dearest when most thy tender traits express
> The image of thy mother's loveliness.

It was then (July, 1813) that, on his mother's invitation, and in the absence of Mr. Timothy Shelley and his sisters, Shelley saw his birth-place, Field Place, for the last time. He stayed there for some days incognito, under the name of Captain Jones, wearing, when out of doors, the uniform of a young officer who was then quartered at Horsham. Captain Kennedy has left us in a long letter his impressions of the poet :

> . . . I found him with his mother and two elder sisters in a small room off the drawing-room, which they had named Confusion Hall. He received me with frankness and kindliness, as if he had known me from childhood, and at once won my heart. . . . The generosity of his disposition and utter unselfishness imposed upon him the necessity of strict self-denial in personal comforts. Consequently he was obliged to be most economical in his dress. He one day asked us how we liked his coat, the only one he had brought with him. We said it was very nice ; it looked as if new. "Well," said he, "it is an old black coat which I have had done up, and smartened with metal buttons and a velvet collar." . . . He discoursed with eloquence and enthusiasm. He said that he once thought the surrounding atmosphere was peopled with the spirits of the departed.

He read poetry with great emphasis and solemnity ; one evening he read aloud to us a translation of one of Goethe's poems, and at this day I think I hear him. In music he seemed to delight as a medium of association ; the tunes which had been favourites in boyhood charmed him. There was one, which he played several times on the piano with one hand, which seemed to absorb him ; it was an exceedingly simple air, which I understand his earliest love (Harriet Grove) was wont to play for him. He soon left us, and I never saw him after, but I can never forget him. He was an amiable, gentle being.

Shortly before this visit Shelley had left London, in order to establish himself less expensively in a little cottage called High Elms. It was situated at Bracknell, in Berkshire, not far from Eton, and in the neighbourhood of the Newtons and "Maimuna"; and to High Elms came with him Thomas Love Peacock,* one of his most beloved friends, and worthy, both in intellect and heart, of Shelley's affection. Their intimacy dated from the previous year, at Cwm Elan, became closer still at Bracknell, and lasted without a cloud unto the end. At a time when

* Both as poet and satirical novelist, Peacock deserves attention, and Shelley's high opinion of his talents and character is not his least claim to posthumous appreciation. There is an excellent article on Peacock in the *British Review* for January, 1874.

Peacock was in difficulties Shelley made him an allowance of £100 a year, and continued to express the warmest feelings of friendship for him, even after his own departure from England.

Shelley came of age while at Bracknell. His pecuniary condition continued to be deplorable; there was an accumulation of debts, and even a risk of arrest as an insolvent debtor, which his father privately averted. In October, however, he found himself compelled to resort to post-obit bonds in order to raise money.

But while awaiting the settlement of his affairs, he resolved to revisit the scenes which had witnessed the early days of his union with Harriet; his friends at Keswick,* the Calverts, and Edinburgh. Peacock was of the party. Although Shelley did not find in Peacock the perfect sympathy of ideas and aspirations that he would have desired, he recognised an agreeable and intellectual companion in his new friend, and also a scholar who was neither superstitious nor dogmatical.

* Just at this time Southey had accepted the Poet-Laureateship, and was accused by the *Examiner* and other Liberal journals of apostasy.

He returned to London in December, and soon afterwards hired a furnished house at Windsor, at no great distance from Bracknell and the Boinvilles. Throughout these incessant wanderings he continued to devote himself to varied and serious study. He read Tacitus, the philosophical works of Cicero, "one of the finest characters the world has ever produced," La Place's "System of the World," and Grenville's Homer, in two Russia-bound volumes.

"It would be a curious problem," says Hogg, "to calculate how many times he read the whole through. He devoured in silence . . . often by firelight . . . and he would read some sublime passage aloud, if there was any one at hand to listen, with extreme rapidity and animation . . . nor would he cease until he reached the end of the book, and then, closing it . . . and lifting up his eyes to the ceiling, he exclaimed with heartfelt pleasure, 'Hah!' remaining for some minutes in an attitude of veneration, wholly absorbed in pleasure and admiration."

The outcome of his philosophical studies in 1813, was a remarkable little book written in the form of a dialogue between a Deist and a Christian, and entitled, "A Refutation of Deism," which appeared early in 1814. Shelley very subtly places the refutation of Christianity in the mouth of the Deist, and that of Deism in the

mouth of the Christian; the theosophist demolishes Christianity, whereas the Christian Eusebius, by proving that there is no middle position between Atheism and Christianity, is merely a disguised Atheist demolishing Deism. While thus developing the arguments in the notes to "Queen Mab," the dialogue (which, moreover, was only addressed to the elect few) shows a considerable advance both in style and thought. The latter is more elevated, more self-sustained, stronger, less aggressive, and less declamatory. Mr. Dowden points out as particularly noteworthy, Shelley's criticism of the argument from Design in Nature. He brings us to this conclusion: "That our ignorance alone incapacitates us from referring every phenomenon, however unusual, minute, or complex, to the laws of motion and the properties of matter; and it is an egregious offence against the first principles of reason, to suppose an immaterial creator of the world, *in quo omnia moventur sed sine mutuâ passione,* which is equally a superfluous hypothesis in the mechanical philosophy of Newton, and an useless excrescence on the inductive logic of Bacon."

Weary of incessant wanderings, and pro-

bably in accordance with the wise counsels of Maimuna,* Shelley seemed inclined to rest for a time, while continuing to urge an arrangement on his father, which would relieve him from his pecuniary embarrassments. He enjoyed the desired rest in long visits to his Bracknell friends in the early part of 1814.

On resuming his momentarily interrupted correspondence with Hogg, he writes to him from Bracknell on March 16th:

I have been staying with Mrs. Boinville for the last month. I have escaped, in the society of all that philosophy and friendship combined, from the dismaying solitude of myself. They have revived in my heart the expiring flame of life. I have felt myself translated to a paradise, which has nothing of mortality but its transitoriness; my heart sickens at the view of that necessity, which will quickly divide me from the delightful tranquillity of this happy home, for it has become my home. The trees, the bridge, the minutest objects, have already a place in my affections.

My friend, you are happier than I. You have the pleasures as well as the pains of sensibility. I have sunk

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* "Seriously," she writes to Hogg in March, 1814, "I think his mind and body want rest. His journeys after what he has never found have racked his purse and his tranquillity. He is resolved to take a little care of the former in pity to the latter, which I applaud, and shall second with all my might. . . . He is seeking a house close to us. . . ."

into a premature old age of exhaustion, which renders me dead to everything but the unenviable capacity of indulging the vanity of hope, and a terrible susceptibility to objects of disgust and hatred.

My temporal concerns are slowly rectifying themselves; I am astonished at my own indifference to their event. I live here like the insect that sports in a transient sunbeam, which the next cloud shall obscure for ever. I am much changed from what I was. I look with regret to our happy evenings at Oxford, and with wonder at the hopes which in the excess of my madness I there encouraged. Burns says, you know:

> "Pleasures are like poppies spread:
> You seize the flower—the bloom is fled;
> Or, like the snow, falls in the river,
> A moment white—then lost for ever."

Eliza is still with us—not here, but will be with me when the infinite malice of destiny forces me to depart. I am now but little inclined to contest this point. I certainly hate her with all my heart and soul. It is a sight which awakens an inexpressible sensation of disgust and horror, to see her caress my poor little Ianthe, in whom I may hereafter find the consolation of sympathy. I sometimes feel faint with the fatigue of checking the overflowings of my unbounded abhorrence for this miserable wretch. But she is no more than a blind and loathsome worm, that cannot see to sting.

I have begun to learn Italian again. I am reading Beccaria, "Dei delitti e pene." His essay seems to contain some excellent remarks, though I do not think that it deserves the reputation it has gained. Cornelia assists me in this language. Did I not once tell you that I thought her cold and reserved? She is the reverse of this, as she is the reverse of everything bad. She inherits all the divinity of her mother.

What have you written? I have been unable even to write a common letter. I have forced myself to read Beccaria, and Dumont's Bentham. I have sometimes forgotten that I am not an inmate of this delightful home—that a time will come which will cast me again into the boundless ocean of abhorred society.

I have written nothing but one stanza, which has no meaning, and that I have only written in thought:

> Thy dewy looks sink in my breast;
> Thy gentle words stir poison there;
> Thou hast disturbed the only rest
> That was the portion of despair!
> Subdued to Duty's hard control,
> I could have borne my wayward lot:
> The chains that bind this ruined soul
> Had cankered them, but crushed it not.

This is the vision of a delirious and distempered dream, which passes away at the cold, clear light of morning. Its surpassing excellence and exquisite perfections have no more reality than the colour of an autumnal sunset. Adieu.

This despairing letter throws a light on the state of Shelley's mind, and prepares us for the abrupt catastrophe which was impending. Shelley's home had become a hell.

The hour of parting was at hand. Ever since the autumn of 1813 serious differences of opinion had caused a coolness between Shelley and Harriet. His sonnet to Harriet on her birthday in September is very unlike that one he had

addressed to her the preceding year. As Mr. Dowden, who first published it, remarks, "there is something in it of the strangeness and sadness of sunset," and the little rift in their love is already perceptible :

EVENING. TO HARRIET.

O thou bright sun! beneath the dark blue line
Of western distance that sublime descendest,
And gleaming lovelier as thy beams decline,
Thy million hues to every vapour lendest,
And over cobweb, lawn, and grove, and stream
Sheddest the liquid magic of thy light,
Till calm earth, with the parting splendour bright,
Shows like the vision of a beauteous dream;
What gazer now with astronomic eye
Could coldly count the spots within thy sphere?
Such were thy lover, Harriet, could he fly
The thoughts of all that makes his passion dear,
And turning senseless from thy warm caress
Pick flaws in our close-woven happiness.

Dissensions, sooner or later, were inevitable; it was in the nature of things that they should occur. There was too great an incompatibility of education, intellect, temper, and character in the wedded pair for life in common not to become suddenly, at a given moment, hateful and intolerable. Medwin was surprised, not at their

eventual separation, but that they for so long a period "dragged a chain, of which each link was an additional torture." Far be it from us to throw a stone at the good Harriet whom Hogg and Peacock have depicted in such brilliant colours; she paid dearly for the thoughtlessness with which she threw herself into the poet's arms; while Shelley's fault had been that of entering too lightly on so great a venture, and of mistaking his own generous sympathy for love. When on the point of uniting himself to Harriet he had yielded too easily to the impulse of his heart, in spite of reason, which called aloud:

> Hear it not, Percy, for it is a knell
> That summons thee to heaven or to hell.

And hell had come. He had doubtless persuaded himself that, by the mild and eloquent teaching of love, he should bestow intellect and soul on the beautiful doll, and raise her to his own level; but he had failed. He had learnt that she could not rise to his height; that she was deficient in the refinement and delicacy he would fain have found in the companion of his life; that her heart was narrow and cold, inaccessible to the great passions

that filled his own, and incapable of even faintly realising the ideal he had made to himself of love. In a few terrible words he has summed up his grievances against Harriet:

> Every one must know that the partner of my life should be one who can feel poetry and understand philosophy. Harriet is a noble animal, but she can do neither.

In place of a Mary Wollstonecraft, or even of a Madame Boinville, he had found in Harriet a mere woman, more addicted to feminine vanity, and to the comforts and luxuries of life, than to the ideal delights of poetry and philanthropy. For a time, indeed, she had striven to kindle the sacred fire, to stammer the mystic diction of philosophy; but the great words sounded untrue from her lovely lips, and seemed to be accompanied by a smile of bright incredulity. She had allowed herself to join in Peacock's laugh at Shelley for the enthusiasm with which he held the impracticable theories that he believed to be of the highest importance to the happiness and perfectibility of the human race. She had ridiculed the humanitarian and French sentimentality that reigned in Maimuna's circle, and her heart, albeit not a warm one, had felt a sting of jealousy

at the place held by that enchantress in her husband's affections. In or before the first moments of motherhood, Harriet had seen the mirage of earlier days fade away, and had found herself among the realities of daily life. She no longer read aloud, and Shelley ceased to take any interest in her studies. If we may trust Peacock, the disputes between the pair arose principally from two causes: first, that Harriet had delegated her tenderest office towards her babe to a hired nurse; and, secondly, that she persisted in retaining with her the guardian angel, her sister Eliza, whom Shelley regarded with abhorrence. "I always thought," he says, "that if Harriet had suckled her own child, and if her sister had not lived with them, their union would have lasted much longer."

Yet, however strained was the situation, Shelley, from a sense of duty, resigned himself, though not without a hard struggle, to bear a burden which had become the more intolerable from comparison with the ideal happiness he enjoyed at Bracknell. He was so far from thinking of separation from Harriet, that four days after writing the letter to Hogg that we have given above, he renewed the ceremony of

marriage with her according to the Anglican rite at the parish church of St. George. Harriet was again pregnant, and Shelley, for the sake of a possible son and heir, was anxious to ratify the Edinburgh marriage.

In April the poet was once more at Bracknell. "Shelley," wrote Mrs. Boinville to Hogg (April 18th), "is again a widower; his beauteous half went to town on Thursday with Miss Westbrook, who is gone to live, I believe, at Southampton."

But the greater Shelley's delight in the society at Bracknell, the more painful was the return to his silent and desolate hearth; and in this melancholy frame of mind he wrote, on leaving the Boinvilles, the following mournful stanzas:

Away! the moor is dark beneath the moon,
Rapid clouds have drunk the last pale beam of even;
Away! the gathering winds will call the darkness soon,
And profoundest midnight shroud the serene lights of heaven.
Pause not; the time is past! Every voice cries, "Away!"
Tempt not with one last glance thy friend's ungentle mood;
Thy lover's eye, so glazed and cold, dares not entreat thy stay;
Duty and dereliction guide thee back to solitude.

He carried with him the ineffaceable remembrance of that house, and heath, and garden of Bracknell; and, above all, the recollection of the enchantresses who dwelt there, "of the music of two voices and the light of one sweet smile."*

Yet amid all this despair, there was as yet room for hope; if love were dead in Harriet's heart the poet could still appeal to her pity, and implore her not to condemn him to lose all hope. In May, 1814, he addressed to her the following lines, which have been found, in Harriet's own handwriting, among a manuscript collection of poems prepared by Shelley for publication:

TO HARRIET.

Thy look of love has power to calm
  The stormiest passion of my soul;
Thy gentle words are drops of balm
  In life's too bitter bowl;
No grief is mine but that alone
These choicest blessings I have known.

Harriet! if all who long to live
  In the mild sunshine of thine eye,
That price beyond all pain must give
  Beneath thy scorn to die——
Then hear thy chosen own too late
His heart most worthy of thy hate.

* Stanzas, April, 1814.

Be thou, then, one among mankind
Whose heart is harder not for state,
Thou only virtuous, gentle, kind,
Amid a world of hate;
And by a slight endurance seal
A fellow being's lasting weal.

For pale with anguish is his cheek;
His breath comes fast, his eyes are dim;
Thy name is struggling ere he speak;
Weak is each trembling limb.
In mercy let him not endure
The misery of a fatal cure.

O trust for once no erring guide!
Bid the remorseless feeling flee;
'Tis malice, 'tis revenge, 'tis pride,
'Tis anything but thee;
O deign a nobler pride to prove,
And pity if thou canst not love.

It is probable this despairing appeal to Harriet's pity awakened no response in her heart; and we may believe, while allowing for the natural exaggeration of his wounded love, that Shelley regarded such hardness as an unpardonable offence.*

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* Mr. Dowden gives a curious proof of this in the variation of two lines in the sixth stanza of the dedication of "Laon and Cythna." These lines which now stand in the printed text,

Yet never found I one not false to me,
Hard hearts and cold like weights of icy stone!

In presence of such insensibility as this the occasion seemed to have arisen for him to apply to his own case the principles he had stated in a note to "Queen Mab," that marriage could not indissolubly unite two beings who were not made for each other, and that it became their duty to seek love and happiness in another union. This was the *fatal cure* of which he speaks in the stanzas to Harriet.

Since his re-marriage at St. George's he had become more intimate with Godwin, whose embarrassed pecuniary affairs had moved his generous heart,* and he had met, and been strangely impressed by the young daughter of Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, a beautiful girl of seventeen, whose pure, pale face shone with intelligence, sensibility, and earnestness, and in whom was mingled her father's clearness of intellect and firm quietude, with her mother's ardour of imagination and feeling. Shelley was dazzled.

were originally written with allusion to his cousin, Harriet Grove, and to his wife Harriet:

> One whom I found was dear but false to me,
> *The other's heart was like a heart of stone.*

* A sum of £3000 was required, which Shelley found it very difficult to raise.

If we may trust Peacock, who was Shelley's chief friend at the time, his passion for Mary was like a thunderbolt :

"Nothing that I ever read in tale or history," writes he, "could present a more striking image of a sudden, violent, irresistible passion, than that under which I found him labouring, when at his invitation I came back to London from the country. His new passion was to be read in his looks, his red and inflamed eyes, his disordered hair and clothes. He caught up a bottle of laudanum, and said: 'I never part from this;' then he added: 'I am always repeating to myself your lines from Sophocles :

Man's happiest lot is not to be, etc., etc.'"

Hogg knew nothing of this until June 8th.

"We were walking through Newgate Street," he says; "when we reached Skinner Street, Shelley said: 'I must speak with Godwin; come in, I will not detain you long.' I followed him through the shop, which was the only entrance, and upstairs. We entered a room on the first floor. . . . Godwin was not there. Shelley appeared to be displeased at not finding the fountain of 'Political Justice.'

"'Where is Godwin?' he asked me several times, as if I knew. . . . He continued his uneasy promenade; and I stood reading the names of old English authors on the backs of venerable volumes, when the door was softly and partially opened, a thrilling voice called, 'Shelley!' A thrilling voice answered, 'Mary!' and he darted out of the room, like an arrow from the bow of the far-shooting king. A very young female, fair, and fair-haired, pale indeed, and with a piercing look, wearing a frock of tartan, an unusual

dress in London at that time, had called him out of the room. He was absent a very short time—a minute or two, and then returned. 'Godwin is out, there is no use in waiting.' So we continued our walk along Holborn. 'Who was that, pray?' I asked; 'a daughter!' 'Yes.' 'A daughter of William Godwin?' 'The daughter of Godwin, and Mary.' This was the first time that I beheld a very distinguished lady, of whom I have much to say hereafter. . . . Her quietness struck me, and also her paleness and piercing look."

The impression produced on Mary by Shelley was not less profound. His reverence and filial devotion for Godwin, the enthusiastic admiration he expressed for her mother, and more than all, perhaps, his deep sadness revealing some profound sorrow of heart, touched her tender and generous soul; unasked she gave him that pity, so near akin to love, that had been refused him by Harriet, and on one occasion her emotion overcame her as she gazed on him, and tears rose to her eyes. Shelley laid aside the constraint he had put upon himself, and responded by a little poem which throws more light on the dawn of their affection, and on their delicate and difficult position, than all the narratives of their biographers.

Meanwhile Shelley still corresponded with Harriet, who had removed to Bath. Some few

days had elapsed at the beginning of July, and no letter reaching her from Shelley, she wrote in painful anxiety to the bookseller Hookham, entreating for news of her absent husband, failing which, she would herself come to London. Shelley replied to this that he expected her, and she arrived in town on July 14th.

In the interim, a terrible revelation had dealt a final blow to Shelley's sorely stricken heart; he had convinced himself not only that Harriet had ceased to love him, but that she had given her heart and herself to another.* Holding this conviction, no further hesitation was possible; Harriet might no longer be his wife.

On her arrival in London, Harriet found Shelley fully resolved upon an irrevocable separation.

She felt that resistance would be unavailing, and acquiesced in the proposed arrangements, returning with her child to her father's house, and perhaps hoping that time would restore to her him whom she had not retained on the day when he had pathetically entreated her to reciprocate his love.

* An Irish gentlemen, named Ryan, who in 1813 had been intimate with Shelley and Harriet.

As there was in Shelley's heart neither anger nor animosity, nor desire of revenge, he continued to correspond with Harriet, to provide for her wants, and to occupy himself about her with friendly solicitude, until a time came when she was altogether undeserving of his care. He had done his duty, according to his conscience and his creed, and at a subsequent period could write to Southey, who had entreated him to examine his past life, as follows:

> I take God to witness, if such a being is now regarding both you and me, and I pledge myself if we meet, as perhaps you expect, before Him after death, to repeat the same in His presence, that you accuse me wrongfully. I am innocent of ill, either done or intended.

The new object of his soul's affection, the ideal incarnation of Godwin's genius and Mary Wollstonecraft's noble heart, was clothed in Shelley's eyes with every quality and every perfection of the valiant and ideal woman that Harriet had lacked.

Mr. Jeaffreson exhausts his ingenuity in trying to prove that Mary Godwin was a kind of *ingénue*, who had been brought up in the usual wholesome beliefs concerning marriage and love, and that Shelley was the first to open her eyes

and initiate her into her mother's doctrines. This is wilfully to misread Mary's character and disposition. "She is singularly bold, somewhat imperious, and active in mind," so Godwin wrote of Mary at the age of fifteen; "her desire of knowledge is great, and her perseverance in everything she undertakes almost invincible."

With such a temperament as this, and living as she did in an atmosphere of free-thought, Mary had not needed lessons from Shelley to initiate her into the religion of reason; she had amply profited by the teachings of Mr. Baxter,* with whom she had passed much of her girlhood. Shelley was surprised to meet with such elevation of thought, and such high philosophy, united with such extreme youth, and became her disciple. "I believe," he wrote to her in October, 1814, "I must become in Mary's hands what Harriet was in mine. Yet how differently disposed, how devoted and affectionate, how beyond measure reverencing and adoring the intelligence that governs me!" It was on terms of equality

* "Mr. Baxter," says Dowden, "had fed upon Godwin's doctrines, and on the appearance of 'Queen Mab' expressed his highest admiration for that work."

that Mary, as she herself said at a later period, placed her hand in his hand, and linked her fate with his.

In "Laon and Cythna," Laon bows before the genius of Cythna, and on Cythna the poet confers the part of teacher, of seer, and of prophet.

The tender remembrance of Mary Wollstonecraft hovered over the delicious idyll of these sister-souls, who joined their ardent ideal aspirations in platonic affection, until their lives might be united in love. Their usual meeting-place was the old churchyard of St. Pancras, where was the grave of Mary Wollstonecraft. To the shade of its overhanging willow Mary would escape with her books from the troubles of home and the ill-temper of her stepmother. It was there, probably, that she read "Queen Mab" in the copy given her by Shelley, in which he had written "Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, P.B.S. You see, Mary, I have not forgotten you." At the end of the volume Mary had written in July, 1814:

This book is sacred to me, and as no other creature shall ever look into it, I may write in it what I please.

Yet what shall I write—that I love the author beyond all powers of expression and that I am parted from him, dearest and only love? By that love we have promised to each other, although I may not be yours I can never be another's. But I am thine, exclusively thine.

Then followed these verses:

By the kiss of love, the glance none saw beside,
The smile none else might understand,
The whispered thought of hearts allied,
The pressure of thy thrilling hand.*

I have pledged myself to thee, and sacred is the gift. I remember your words: "You are now, Mary, going to mix with many, and for a moment I shall depart, but in the solitude of your chamber I shall be with you." Yes, you are ever with me, sacred vision—

But ah! I feel in this was given
A blessing never meant for me;
Thou art too like a dream from heaven
For earthly love to merit thee.†

A short separation had been imposed on Shelley by Godwin. The latter was certainly no very austere Géronte; but he had been informed of the secret meetings of the young people, with whom he had seriously remonstrated.

* From Byron's "To Thyrza," the first line being altered.

† From Byron's lines beginning, "If sometimes in the haunts of men."

In order to lull the watchfulness of the philosopher, Shelley for a while ceased to see Mary. But the vows they had interchanged, and the ardour of their love, could endure no long separation; they loved each other, and who should prevent the union of their lives? Without the knowledge of Godwin and his wife, the lovers made their secret arrangements, and the astonishment of the author of "Political Justice" was great when on the morning of June 28th, he was informed that Mary's and Jane Clairmont's rooms were empty. The lovers were flying to the Continent.

END OF VOL. I.

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Rabbe, Félix
Shelley: the man and the poet

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